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The Forest of Laughs (*Xiaolin*)

Mapping the offspring of self-aware literature in ancient China

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Introduction

Literary history, as established in 20th century China, mostly believed that Confucian conservatism had always oppressed and marginalized practices of "humour" in China.[1] This view, formulated in early 20th century when anti-traditionalism prevailed among Chinese intellectuals, regarded entertaining practices as suppressed and suffocated by Confucian moralizing and at that time even the notion of "humour" itself was introduced to China using an English word (*humour-youmo* 幽默).[2] As a result, in sinology until recently the topic of "humour"[3] in literature was – with only few exceptions – [4] perceived as marginal to the understanding of ancient Chinese society and culture (as very few works have been published on the topic of Chinese humour, which, though, do not bring valued insights to the topic).[5] However, in early sources there are evidences of entertaining practices linked to humour, which can be traced back to Warring States period. The first step toward a reconsideration of the tradition could be due to the findings, particularly from the last decade (referring in particular to Guodian 郭店 excavation in late 1993), of new

[1] See for example: Feinberg, L. 1971, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, New York, Weatherhill; or Hu, Weihe, 2004, "The Confucian Politics of Appearance: And Its Impact on Chinese Humor," in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 514-532.

[2] Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895-1976) used the world *youmo*幽默, previously meaning "dark" or "quiet," to translate the English word "humour;" two essays, in particular, started the discussion about this topic influencing the literary circles: "Zhengfan sanwen bing tichang youmo" 征譯散文並提倡幽默 in *Chenbao fukan* 晨報副刊, 23-5-1924, and "Youmo zahua" 幽默雜話, *Chenbao fukan* 晨報副刊, 9-6-1924. Then Lin's "Lun youmo"論幽默 published in the *Lunyu* 論語magazine in 1-1-1939 gave the most echoed contribute about the topic of "humour" in the literary debate of the time. For a survey about Lin Yutang and his magazines see Laughlin, Charles A, 2008, *The literature of leisure and Chinese modernity*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii press; in particular the chapter "Enjoying: essays of the Analects Group," pp. 109-138.

[3] The concept of "Humour" is difficult to define because even if scholars of different disciplines (philosophers, philologists, sociologists, linguist etc) have tried to find an all-encompassing theory of humour and laughter, mistakenly suggesting that it could "exists something like an 'ontology of humour', and that humour and laughter are transcultural and ahistorical", they both are, in reality, cultural determined phenomena (Bremmer and Roodemburg, 2007, p. 3). In this thesis, I will use, then, the word "humour" (as it is defined by recent cultural studies) as: "the most general and neutral notion availed to cover a whole variety of behaviour: from […] practical jokes to puns, farce to foolery. Humour seen as any message –transmitted in action, speech, writing, images or music- intended to produce a smile or a laugh," (Bremmer and Roodemburg, 2007, p. 1).

[4] Knechtges, David R., 1970-71, "Wit, Humor, and Satire in Early Chinese Literature (to A.D. 220)" in *Monumenta Serica*, Vol. XXIX, pp. 78-98; Harbsmeier, Christoph., 1989, "Humor in Ancient Chinese Philosophy." *Philosophy East and West* Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 289-310, and 1990, "Confucius Ridens: Humor in the Analects." in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studie*s, Vol. 50, N.1, pp. 131–162.

[5] George Kao, 1946, *Chinese Wit and Humor* or Henry W. Wells, 1971, *Traditional Chinese humor: a study in art and literature*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

textual materials which obliged the scholars to confront with a different reality of texts and thoughts (expressed by the texts) from that they have previously reconstructed. This led to a rethinking of the terminology previously used,[6] and to a discussion of the notions about Chinese history (and the fields linked to it, such as society, literature, philosophy, etc.), which before were rarely being questioned.[7] Moreover, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the archaeological discovery at the Donghuang 's site brought to light previously unseen kinds of *fu* poetry (labelled *sufu* 俗賦 or vulgar *fu*) ascribed to the early Tang period. Subsequently, the discovery in the Yinwan 尹灣 tomb n. 6 (Jiangsu, 1993) of the "Shenwu fu" 神烏賦, written in a style similar to those of Donghuang's and dated back to Western Han times,[8] added another piece to a better understanding of the literary panorama during Han times.[9] Reconsidering the textual material in the light of the information revealed by the new findings, it is possible to see how in ancient China, the cultural and literary panorama was not dominated by monolithic views. In particular, as far as western Han court is concerned, it is evident that its cultural atmosphere was not unidirectional. The scholars who referred to the traditional learning were engaged in a continuous debate with another group within the educated elite who were representative of its non-canonical lineage.

My research is part of this debate. My approach aims to point out that the traditional negative judgment about entertaining literature (with "humorous" features) was a product of the view of Han dynasty traditional scholars (Liu Xiang, Liu Xin, Ban Gu), who saw in the didactic stand the primary aim of literary production. This conservative view succeeded in becoming the canonical so that it

[6] This part concerns western sinology which, for example, previously translated *ru* as "Confucian" but now generally agree on "classicist;" see Michel Nylan, 1999, "Han Confucianism," in *Imagining Boundaries: Changing Confucian Doctrines, Texts, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Kai-wing Chow, Albany, State University of New York Press, pp. 17-56. Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan, 2003, "Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China", in *T'oung Pao*, Vol. 89, Fasc. 1/3, pp. 59-99. See also Petersen, Jens Østergård, "Which Books Did the First Emperor of Ch'in Burn? On the Meaning of *Pai Chia* in Early Chinese Sources", *Monumenta Serica*, 43 (1995): 1-52.

[7] For example, Martin Kern in *The stele inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang: text and ritual in early Chinese imperial representation* (New Haven, Conn, American Oriental Soc. 2000) portrays the Qin First Emperor in a different way from that of a despotic tyrant voted to the destruction of *ru* scholars, as he was traditionally depicted.

[8] For more information see Van Ess, Hans, 2003, "An Interpretation of the Shenwu fu of Tomb No. 6, Yinwan," in *Monumenta Serica*, Vol. 51, pp. 605-628; and several articles collected in the volume edited by the Museum of Lianyungang 連雲港市博物館, 1999, *Yinwan Hanmy jiandu zonglun* 尹灣漢墓簡牘縱論, Beijing, Kexue.

[9] Fu Junlian 2009, "Sufu de faxian ji qi wenxue shi yiyi" 俗賦的發現及其文學史意義, in *Fudan xuebao*, No. 6, pp. 118-119.

remains weightier in the literary criticism of later times. It succeeded in fact in establishing itself as the trustful view in the survey of literary history, and it also affected modern literary theory.

In the modern era, the May Fourth Movement promoted a freedom from the formal and ideological constraints of the Chinese literary tradition, and radically rejected it. However, its literary ideology, which advocated in the literary products a reflection of society and life and a manifest ideological content, can be traced back to the traditional conservative view of the early period quoted above.[10] As a result, even today Chinese scholarship is still heavily influenced by the historical patterns of development of literary history established by this previous criticism.[11]

Despite that, since the Han dynasty this conservative view was not the unique voice in the literary panorama. Accordingly, my aim is to bring to attention practices of entertainment and entertaining literature (in which "humorous" features are involved) which thus far have been left in the margins of the studies of classical Chinese literature.

My research is focused on the Wei-Jin period, and in particular, it is centred on the analysis of the *Xiaolin* 笑林 (*Forest of Laughs*), the first specimen of collections of anecdotes specifically written for entertainment purposes. This collection of "humorous" stories was composed by Handan Chun 邯鄲淳 (?132–225? AD) a famous scholar of Later Han – Wei period. It was lost during the Song dynasty and only during the Ming period its anecdotes (actually, part of it as the original structure of the book is unknown), which were scattered in several collectanea, were collected together again. Today the *Xiaolin* is considered by Chinese scholars as the first collection of jokes (*xiaohua* 笑話)[12] appearing in the history of Chinese literature, and the earliest example of *zhiren xiaoshuo* 志人小説

[10] Liping Feng talks about an explicit "elitism" contained in the May Fourth literary revolution, which not only did not bring freedom to fiction, rather imposed a new set of rules (Feng, 1996, pp. 75-76). In particular, it is worthy of noticing here the statement made by Zhou Zuoren (in 1918) about Chinese fiction: "Now if we take purely literary examples, [then there are]: 1) pornographic books of sex-maniacs; 2) superstitious books on ghosts and gods…;3) books about immortals; 4) books about spirits and demons; 5) books of slave [mentality]…;6) books about robbers; 7) books of beauty and talent…8) *low, comic book*; 9) scandal stories; 10) old-style drama that combines all these types mentioned above. *All these types [of books] inhibit the growth of human nature, destroy the balance and harmony of mankind, and therefore should be totally rejected*;" as quoted by Feng, 1996, p. 178 (cursive mine).

[11] For an insight about this issue, especially concerning the studies about *fu* poetry, see Kern, 2003b, 385-388, and Knechtges, 1976, pp. 109-110. See also Wan Guangzhi (1989, pp. 134-137) treatment of Hongdu Gate academy's literary production (Chapter 1. 2. 2, notes).

[12] Hou Zhongyi, 1990, p. 99.

(records of personalities).[13] If it is true that *Xiaolin*'s anecdotes had no other aim than entertaining, it can, with reason, be considered the offspring of self-aware literature in ancient China.

My research tries to bring evidence to these last statements; hence, the inquiry is divided into three chapters:

The first chapter deals with intellectual history, understood as the investigation about the interactions between texts and social process.[14] I will provide a historical survey of the intellectual debate at court among the members of educated elite since Western Han to Wei-Jin period to provide evidences on how it was possible to find authors and readers in the Wei period who were interested in, and bestowing value to, entertaining literature (with humorous features), when previously these kinds of texts were criticized, and didactic-moralizing aims were preferred. To this end, the focus of the inquiry will be on a key term, *paiyou xiaoshu* 俳優小説. This expression appears for the first time in a historical record in which is described the first encounter between Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232 AD), and Handan Chun, the *Xiaolin*'s author. In this anecdote it is said Cao Zhi performed before Handan Chun a recitation of "thousands of words of *humorous works*," defined as *paiyou xiaoshuo*. I will investigate what this adjective means in this particular context. Furthermore, I will analyse what the word "paiyou" originally meant, trying to highlight its transformation from a term that identifies a social category of people (the jester) to an adjective which qualifies first a kind of author, then a type of text, in a survey touching Warring States period to Wei-Jin time.

The second chapter draws attention to the morphology and the structure of the brief narratives, which are collected under the title of *Xiaolin.* I will show that the anecdotes contained in the *Xiaolin*, structurally and morphologically, do not differ from the stories embedded in the works of the Masters (*zi*) or in historical texts. Their difference is in their reading paradigm. To highlight how these stories, so similar to traditional anecdotes which had a didactic-moralizing aim, could however change their reading paradigm and becoming entertaining pieces of literature, I will examine a string of similar stories collected from different kinds of sources, in which

[13] Ning Jiayu, 1991, p. 13; Gu Nong, 2000, p. 80.
[14] For a more detailed analysis of this topic see Dominick LaCapra, 1983, *Rethinking intellectual history: texts, contexts, language*, Ithaca, Cornell U.P.

Xiaolin is included. On the basis of this analysis I will provide then some statements regarding the material arranged by Handan Chun.

The third chapter will mainly focus on the life of Handan Chun and his literary works. The aim of this last part is not only to provide historical information of the author’s deeds and compositions, but also to show him as a characteristic member of the educated elite of his own time. In order to do this, the chronological narration of the events will be supplied with analysis about three topics (calligraphy, riddle-like forms of literary compositions, and social games) closely related to his figure which are also distinctive for the members of the educated elite of the time. This will enable a better understanding of the educated society of the Wei-Jin period.

Four appendices follow. The first (A) provides the critical edition of the anecdotes ascribed to the *Xiaolin*, with their translations. The second (B) presents the translation of the *Shiji* 史記’s “Guji liezhuan” 滑稽列傳 chapter written by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145–c. 90 BC), which in modern times, has been considered the starting point to discuss the topic of “humour” in ancient China, and at the same time, an historical source to analyse the figure of the court jester. The translation of two anecdotes of the same chapter but written by Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 (c. 105–c. 30 BC) are also provided, as their protagonist, Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (c. 161–86 BC), is a key figure when investigating practices of entertainment in classical China and he is quoted several times in this thesis. The third appendix (C) is the translation of the “Xie yin” chapter, contained in Liu Xie 劉勰’s (5th century AD) *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍. The *Wenxin diaolong*, being the first systematic work of literary criticism in China is also the first to identify a category for those literary works that owned “humorous features.” Its insights and judgment about literary production are also quoted several times in this research. The last appendix (D) is composed by the Chinese texts translated.

The aim of my research is, then, to place entertaining literary practices (in which “humorous” features are involved) in their original context. These non-canonical currents were part of the cultural debate; therefore, they need to be investigated for a better understanding of classical Chinese society and literary history.

Chapter 1 – The *Xiaolin* as a *paiyou xiaoshuo*

The *Xiaolin* 笑林 (Forest of Laughs) is a collection of humorous anecdotes ascribed to Handan Chun 邯鄲淳 (?132–225?), a prominent scholar during the Three Kingdoms period (220–280 A.D.). He was a friend of Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) and in one anecdote, which records their first encounter, it is said Cao Zhi performed before Handan a recitation of "thousands of words of humorous works," defined in Chinese as *paiyou xiaoshuo* 俳優小說. This chapter researches what this adjective means in this particular context, looking for evidence of the term "paiyou" in previous literature. It analyses what the word "paiyou" originally meant, trying to highlight its transformation from a term that identifies a social category of people (the jester) to an adjective which qualifies first a kind of author, then a type of texts. The aim of the research is to argue that during Wei period *paiyou xiaoshuo* describes a category of humorous texts, appreciated by the scholars of the time, whose main purpose was to entertain the educated elite, and that the *Xiaolin* was one of such a kind of text. Hence, tracing the evolution of the term we will also provide a historical survey in which we are going to highlight the social changing that made possible the appearance of a new kind of writings.

The first encounter between Handan Chun and Cao Zhi is recorded in a passage of the Yu Huan 魚豢's (c. 3rd century) *Weilue* 魏略, quoted by the Pei Songzhi 裴松之's (372–451 AD) commentary to the *Sangguozhi* 三國志. The account, even if fictional, can provide an interesting insight into our understanding of the intellectual and social life of the educated elite during the early Wei period. It is quoted in its entirety below:

> 植初得淳甚喜，延入坐，不先與談。時天暑熱，植因呼常從取水自澡訖，傅粉。遂科頭拍袒，胡舞五椎鍛，跳丸擊劍，誦俳優小說數千言訖，謂淳曰："邯鄲生何如邪？"於是乃更著衣幘，整儀容，與淳評說混元造化之端，品物區別之意，然後論羲皇以來賢聖名臣烈士優劣之差，次頌古今文章賦誄及當官

政事宜所先後，又論用武行兵倚伏之勢。乃命廚宰，酒炙交至，坐席默然，無與伉者。及暮，淳歸，對其所知歎植之材，謂之“天人”。

Cao Zhi was delighted by his acquaintance with Chun. He invited Chun over, but left him alone at first. It was a hot summer day, so Zhi ordered attendants to fetch water. After bathing and powdering himself, Zhi, bare–headed and topless, performed the barbarian dance, “Five–Hammer Tempering,” and engaged in juggling and fencing. He also recited thousands of words of humorous works. After doing all this, he asked Chun: “How do you compare with me, Scholar Handan?” Then, putting on his clothes and hat and straightening his manner and appearance, he started discussing with Chun the creation of all things from the original chaos, and the significance of classifying and differentiating people. He then ranked sages, worthies, famous statesmen, and glorious gentlemen since Fu Xi’s time. He also critiqued writings, poetic expositions, and eulogies from the past to the present, and detailed the rules of political affairs. Finally he came to the discussion of military arts and tactics. At this point, Zhi ordered his chef to bring in wine and dishes. All who attended were speechless, and no one rose to refute him. At dusk, when Chun went home, he sighed with admiration for Zhi’s talents, praising him as an “immortal.”[15]

In this passage, as Qian Nanxiu states, Cao Zhi expresses all the abilities required for a Wei period *shi* 士:[16] political and military understanding, literary creation, acrobatic skills and philosophical reasoning among others.[17] All these qualities were the subjects of Wei Jin “pure conversations,” but what is crucial for the object of this research is Cao Zhi’s recitation of “thousands of words of *humorous works*,” defined in Chinese as *paiyou xiaoshuo*. *Paiyou xiaoshuo*, as a term that identifies a type of literary work, appears here for the first time. *Xiaoshuo* is the term that identifies the “category” to which *Xiaolin* as a text belongs; a category in which converged different kinds of works that did not fit in more defined categories and which were united by being judged as texts of lesser importance.[18] The binomial word *paiyou*

[15] *SGZ* 21.602; trans. Qian Nanxiu, 2001, p. 35. The passage is also translated in Connery 1998, p. 97.
[16] According to Hucker (1985, p. 421, entry n° 5200): “*Shi*, Elite: throughout history a broad generic reference to the group dominant in government, which also was the Paramount group in society; originally a warrior caste, it was gradually transformed into a non-hereditary, ill-defined class of bureaucrats among whom litterateurs were most highly esteemed. […] Han: Servicemen, lowest of 10 status groups for regular officials.”
[17] Qian Nanxiu, 2001, pp. 35-36.
[18] On the *xiaoshuo* topic see: Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈, 1979, “Hanshu 'Yiwenzhi' xiaoshuojia kaobian” 漢書藝文志小説家考辨, *Wenshi* 文史, n. 7, pp. 179-89; Hegel, E. Robert, 1994, “Traditional

specifies a quality of the text. To understand what this adjective means in this particular context, it is necessary to find evidence of its usage in previous literature and analyse what the word "paiyou" originally meant.

1. 1. *Paiyou*, the jester

According to the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 *pai* 俳 means *xi* 戲 or "to make fun of, to joke." The Qing Dynasty's scholar, Duan Yucai 段玉裁, in his annotated *Shuowen* edition, at the *pai* character entry explains: "[If we] speak about their jokes, we call them *pai* 俳, if we speak about their music [skills], we call them *chang* 倡; also they correspond to *you* 優, in fact they are the same figure."[19] Following Duan's understanding, *pai* and *chang* are the arts that the *you* mastered. Wang Guowei 王國維in the first chapter of his *Song Yuan xiqu shi* 宋元戲曲史 (originally called *Song Yuan xiqu kao* 宋元戲曲考), a pioneer study about Chinese theatre first published in 1913, tried to give a first description of what was a *you* in ancient China starting from the textual evidence of Warring States period.[20] Subsequently, Feng Yuanjun 馮遠君 in the forties dedicated a large part of her research to this topic, and distinguished in detail this character's features according to his entertaining skills (sing, dance, jokes, etc);[21] nevertheless, despite their efforts to identify a clear definition of every term, the words *you*, *chang* and *pai* in reality are often interchangeable, and the compound *paiyou* is somehow synonymous, and can be

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Chinese Fiction-The State of the Field" in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 2, pp. 394-426; Holzman, Donald, 2003, "Liu Xiang's Attitude towards Fiction," in *Recarving the Dragon: Understanding Chinese Poetics*, Lomova, Olga (ed.),Charles University in Prague, Karolinum Press, pp. 73-83. Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, 1987, "Qin jian zhong 'baiguan' ji Ru Chun cheng Wei shi wei 'ouyu wei bai' shuo: Lun xiaoshuo yu baiguan" 秦簡中稗官及如淳稱魏時謂偶語為稗說：論小說與稗官, in *Wang Li xiansheng jinian lunwen ji* 王力先生紀念論文集，Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, pp. 337-42. Wu, Hua Laura, 1995, "From *Xiaoshuo* to Fiction: Hu Yinglin's Genre Study of *Xiaoshuo*," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 55, No.2. , pp. 339-371.

[19]"以其戲言, 謂之俳，以其音樂言之, 謂之倡。亦謂之優，實一物也;" *SWJZ*, 380.

[20] Wang Guowei, 1998, pp. 2-14.

[21] Feng Yuanjun's works about the *you* are her most important accomplishment; They are *Guyoujie* 古優解(1941), *Han fu yu gu you* 漢賦與古優(1943), *Guyoujie buzheng* 古優解補正(1946), now collected in the *Feng Yuanjun gudian wenxue wenji* 馮沅君古典文學論文集, Jinan, Shandong renmin, 1980. Some texts, in fact, seem to distinguish different types of jester; for example in the *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋we read: "今君左為倡，右為優，讒人在前，諛人在後"; *YC* 1982, 247.

variously translated as "jester," "buffoon," or "court's entertainer."[22] Wang and Feng's works were published before the archaeological findings of Han dynasty mounds. Beginning in 1954 in the Chengdu area several sites (for examples Yangzishan 羊子山 site, Tianhuishan 天迴山 site) were discovered with underground tombs having remains from the Western Han dynasty period. The excavations revealed pottery figurines of men doing various kinds of performances that were identified by the archaeologists as *you*, testifying the real existence of this character at the Han court.[23] According to several pieces of textual evidence from Qin and Han times,[24] they were often in company with dwarfs, [25] had a very low social position and some of them were perhaps slaves brought as a gift to the court from foreign countries.[26] Nevertheless, they were professionals and their duty was to entertain the rulers (and subsequently the emperors) with their various skills, ranging from dancing, singing, and cracking jokes and telling funny stories to make the sovereign laugh. This last talent was accomplished via their language ability. Feng Yuanjun formulated a typology of the jesters divided into four categories according to their entertaining abilities. She called the jesters skilled in language ability "*guji* entertainer" (*guji yuren* 滑稽娛人),[27] clearly echoing the "Guji liezhuan" 滑稽列傳 chapter of the *Shiji* 史記.[28]

[22] *SWJZ*, 375-76, 379-80. Li Guotao groups *ling* 伶, *pai* 俳, *you* 優, *chang* 倡 under the same category of "performers," see. Li Guotao, 2004, p. 1, 235-36.
[23] See Boltz, Judith Magee, 1975, "Divertissement in Western Han," in *Early China*, No. 1, pp. 56-62.
[24] See Yu Tianchi 于天池, 2005, "Liang Han paiyou jie" 兩漢俳優解, in *Wenhua guangjiao*, n. 2, pp. 95-103; Liu Zhiyuan 劉志遠, Yu Dezhang 餘德章, Liu Wenjie 劉文傑, 1983, *Sichuan Handai huaxiang zhuan yu Handai Shehui* 四川漢代畫像磚與漢代社會, Beijing, Wenwu, pp. 123-130.
[25] See the following passages: 俳優、侏儒、婦女之請謁以悖之, *XZ* 11. 226; "今俳優、侏儒、狎徒詈侮而不鬥者", *XZ 18.* 340; "而俳優侏儒，固人主之所與燕也" *HFZ* 38. 396. We can clearly see that *paiyou* and *zhuru* (dwarfs) are not the same thing. Not all the *paiyou* were dwarfs, as some scholars think (see Yu Tianchi, 2005, p. 98). To the contrary, the latter were probably a kind of *paiyou*, a sub-category.
[26] Rudolph, 1981, p. 279, n. 24. Feng Yuanjun, 1956, p. 52; Li Guotao disagrees with Feng Yuanjun's analysis that the *you* had a status similar to that of the slave, stating that the *you* was instead part of the music bureau, so actually an official; see Li Guotai, 2004, p. 231-235; My understanding of *you* social status follows Feng Yuanjun's scholarly tradition, as in contemporary academic articles I didn't find evidence of an acknowledgement of Li's thesis.
[27] For the other categories see Feng Yuanjun, 1980 and Hong Zhiyuan, 2006a, p. 53-56.
[28] *SJ* 126. 3197-3214.

1. 1. 2. The “Guji liezhuan” chapter, biographies about the jesters?

The “Guji liezhuan” in fact holds a delicate position: because the protagonists make the sovereign laugh with their speeches, some of them are jesters, and 滑稽, read *huaji* in modern Chinese means “funny, comic.” The chapter has been taken as the starting point to discuss about the topic of “humour” in the survey of ancient Chinese tradition, and at the same time it has been considered as an historical source to analyse the figure of the court jester in ancient China. Its title has been translated into western languages in different ways; some scholars have stressed the accent on the protagonists of the tales, translating the *guji* as a noun: “ humorists,” “bouffons,” “wits and humorists,”[29] or “jesters;”[30] others have paid more attention to the quality of the speech of the protagonists, translating *guji* as an adjective: “beaux parleurs,”[31] “clever speakers,”[32] “smooth talkers,”[33] “ironical critics,”[34]and “slick reminders,”[35] just to make some examples.

But what does the word *guji* mean? The *Shiji suoyin* commentary gives the phonetic indication to read 滑稽 as *guji*, and says: “G*u* means *luan* 亂 ‘chaotic’ and *ji* 稽has the same meaning. The men who can speak and argue quickly, regard as *fei* 非 (it is not so) what is *shi* 是 (it is so), and explain *shi* as if it was *fei*. Their speeches can confuse what is different and what is the same (*yi tong* 異同).”[36] This explanation identifies with *guji* a language ability, the skill to speak fluent and be

[29] Pokora, 1973, p. 50, and n. 7-10.
[30] Yang, Gladys and Hsien-yi Yang, 1974, p. 403.
[31] Chavannes, 1967, p. CCXLIX.
[32] Bodde, 1967, p. 110.
[33] Knechtges, 1970-71, p. 83.
[34] Pokora, 1973.
[35] Schaberg, 2005b, p. 199.
[36] 滑，亂也；稽，同也。言辨捷之人言非若是，說是若非，言能亂異同也, *SJ* 126. 3197, *SJ* 71. 2307, n. 2. This explanation is very similar to a passage found in the “Xiu shen” 修身 chapter of the *Xunzi*. This passage says: “to recognize as right (*shi*) what is right and as wrong (*fei*) what is wrong is called ‘wisdom.’ To regard as wrong what is right and as right what is wrong is called ‘stupidity,’” 是是非非謂之知; 非是是非謂之愚; *XZ* 1/2. 24, trans. Knoblock, 1988, p. 153. Here there is a moral implication. The *Xunzi* also quotes the “tong yi” 同異, or "Identity and Difference," one famous paradox of the Logicians (principally associated with Hui Shi 惠施, 380–305 BC, but discussed also by Gongsun Long 公孫龍, ca. 325–250 BC). In the *Xunzi*, it refers to “treating different entities as thought they were identical and identical entities as thought they were different;” (Knoblock, 1988, p. 150). In the *Lunyu* the way to argue creating paradoxes, which play with *shi* and *fei*, associated to the Logicians and debaters, was the target of criticism. In this text it is said that the crafty speakers can “overturn family and state” 惡利口之覆邦家者, *LY* 17/18. 187; See also *LY* 15/11. 164.

able to play with words and to turn upside down what is regarded as a common sense. To explain in more detail, the commentary cites a passage of the *Chuci* 楚辭's "Buju" 卜居 (Divining over position) poem in which it appears the term *guji*.[37] It says: "[It is better to be incorruptible and upright and keep oneself pure], or be slippery (*tuti* 突梯) and smooth (*guji*) like the lard and the leather?"[38] In the poem, in which the lyric voice of Qu Yuan questions about the right attitude to undertake towards life, the words *tuti* and *guji* have a similar pejorative meaning of "being slicker, tactful,"[39] and to be able to find a place in society and follow the convention.[40] In this passage there is not a direct reference to the language, but we can assume that the "slick and tactful" behaviour can be reflected also in the way someone talks. Then, the commentary records the gloss of Cui Hao 崔浩 (381–450 AD), the more ancient explanation presented, who identifies in *guji* a drinking vessel: "*Guji* is a drinking vessel, it pours the wine all day without stop, as the speech of the *paiyou* that comes out and becomes essays; the words are inexhaustible (*bu qiongjie* 不窮竭), slippery as the wine that endlessly flows is."[41] In the image of the wine that constantly flows we find again the allusion to the jester's language skill, to his being able to talk endlessly. At last, Yao Cha 姚察's (533–606 AD) comment acknowledges the "humoristic" features of the word *guji* and records: "The speech is composed of witticism and is smooth; its clever remarks come out very quick, so it is said 'guji'."[42]

In reality, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145–c. 90 BC), Great Historian and author of the text, called his chapter *guji* but he did not explain what the word meant. He constructed the anecdotes in a way in which the meaning has to result self evident.

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[37] *SJ* 126. 3203.

[38] 將突梯滑稽，如脂如韋, Zhou Binggao, 2003, p. 231; Zhang Yushan, 1986, p. 236. Trans. Knechtges, 1970-1, p. 83, n. 17. David Hawkes translates as: "Is it better to be honest and incorruptible and to keep oneself pure, or to be accommodating and slippery, to be compliant as lard and leather?"; Hawkes, 1959, p. 205.

[39] In particular *tuti*, here employed to mean "be able to understand people's mind and act accordingly."

[40] This last meaning corresponds in particular to *guji*. See Zhou Binggao, 2003, p. 234, n. 21; Zhang Yushan, 1986, p. 237, n. 5.

[41]滑稽，酒器也。可轉注吐酒，終日不已。以言俳優之人出口成章，詞不窮竭，如滑稽之吐酒不已也。*SJ* 71. 2307 n. 2. This explanation is recorded again in a shorter version at *SJ* 126. 3203 n. 2, but here it adds a reference to Yang Xiong's "Jiufu" 酒賦 (Rhapsody on wine): "The leather bag is slippery (*guji*), its belly is big like a kettle, all day filled with wine […] 鴟夷滑稽，腹大如壺，盡日盛酒 (This *fu* is preserved in the *YWLJ* 72. 1248) .

[42] 言諧語滑利，其知計疾出，故云滑稽, *SJ* 126. 3203-3204, n. 2.

He started drawing a connection between the several stories he was going to narrate in this chapter and the Six Disciplines (*Liuyi* 六藝). As the *Liuyi*, the *guji* characters play an important role for the government of the state, [43] and the way by which they accomplish this social function is the indirect remonstrance (*fengjian* 諷諫). The protagonists of the chapter are one *shi*, Chunyu Kun 淳于髡[44] and two jesters, Jester Meng 優孟and Jester Zhan 優旃. Sima Qian compiled their anecdotes following the consolidated tradition of tales about remonstrance recorded in late Warring States texts as the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, the *Guanzi* 管子, and those scripts by the School of Politicians (*Conhengjia* 從橫家).[45] The patterns of the tale of remonstrance highlighted by David Schaberg,[46] can be successfully found in the stories narrated by Sima Qian. Every anecdote can be divided into five sequences, whose presence in each story show that the narrative patterns are consciously constructed.

The five sequences are: 1). At the beginning, we have a ruler who behaves against the ritual propriety; 2). The remonstrant pretends to entertain his lord; 3). The performance of the remonstrant engages the ruler in a game of decoding; 4). The ruler uncovers the critique (in this case, when he laughs, it is the sign that he has understood the real meaning of the entertainment); 5). The ruler is transformed. Hereafter I will give a detailed explanation, analysing one story for each of the three protagonists of the chapter.

The first anecdote regards Chunyu Kun, a man, lived at Qi, who "was a witty person (*guji*) and a good debater, [so] he was sent several times as an envoy to [the states of other] feudal lords and never failed a mission."[47] The story says as follows:

> 齊威王之時喜隱，好為淫樂長夜之飲，沈湎不治，委政卿大夫。百官荒亂，諸侯并侵，國且危亡，在於旦暮，左右莫敢諫。淳于髡說之以隱曰：“

[43] The chapter is introduced by the words of Confucius: "Regarding the government [of a state], as Six Disciplines are concerned, they all are equal important" 六藝於治一也 (this quotation is not found in any of the "Confucian" texts); subsequently, it describes their different use and, at the end of the brief introduction, the historian states: "Even the speeches may subtly hit their marks and serve to settle disputes." 談言微中，亦可以解紛, where *jiefen* 解紛 "settle disputes" has the same meaning of *jieluan* 解亂 "settle a situation of disorder." This means that, analogously to the *Liuyi*, they *zhizhi* 致治 or "contribute to settle the government." See Ruan Zhisheng, 1996, p. 352.

[44] Chunyu Kun, a member of Jixia Academy, was active under the reign of the King Wei of Qi (378 BC–320 BC); see Qian Mu, 1992, pp. 328-331. For more information about this character see Chapter 2. 1. 4.

[45] These anecdotes were collected in the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策; See Loewe, 1993, pp. 1-11.

[46] Schaberg, 2005b, p. 197.

[47] 滑稽多辯，數使諸侯，未嘗屈辱, *SJ* 126. 3197.

國中有大鳥，止王之庭，三年不蜚又不鳴，不知此鳥何也？”王曰：“此鳥不飛則已，一飛沖天；不鳴則已，一鳴驚人。”於是乃朝諸縣令長七十二人，賞一人，誅一人，奮兵而出。諸侯振驚，皆還齊侵地。威行三十六年。語在田完世家中。

King Wei of Qi (378 BC–320 BC)[48] liked riddles and was so given up to pleasure that he [often] spent the whole night drinking. He was so intoxicated by alcohol that he was not able to govern and had to entrust the affairs of state to his ministers. All the officials indulged in licentious attitudes and the feudal lords invaded [the state]. The state [of Qi] was in imminent danger of destruction, yet, from morning to evening, none of his favourite courtiers dared to remonstrate. [Then] Chunyu Kun [tried to] persuade[49] the king with a riddle: “In the kingdom there is a big bird. It has alighted on the royal court. For three years it has neither spread its wings nor cried out. Do you know why it is doing it?”[50]The king replied: “This bird may not have flown yet, once it does, it will soar into the sky. It may not have cried out yet, but once it does, it will astound everyone.” Then he summoned all the seventy–two prefecture’s magistrates to court, rewarded one, punished another, and led out his army. The feudal lords were alarmed and returned to Qi the land that they had overrun. King Wei ruled for thirty–six years, as is recorded in the Biography of Tian Wan.[51]

The anecdote presents at the beginning a situation in which the ruler indulges in wrong behaviour. The King Wei of Qi, in fact, passes his nights drinking and neglecting the government (pattern 1). Therefore, Chunyu Kun tricks him. He knows that the king “likes riddles,” so pretending to entertain him with one of them, he actually uses it as a tool to remonstrate against his behaviour (patter 2). The king, at first unawares of Chunyu Kun’s plan, listens to Chunyu’s performance, trying to solve the riddle (pattern 3). King Wei then understands the covert critique (pattern 4). This passage is exemplified by the answer of the ruler, which already shows the

[48] Guang Shaokui says that at this time Chunyu Kun was already a member of Jixia Academy (Guang Shaokui, 2004, p. 16).

[49] Here the character *shui/shuo* 說 has to be read as *shui* “ to persuade.”

[50] This story is told in the *Shiji*’s “ Annals of Chu” 楚世家 but the protagonist is Wu Ju 伍舉 not Chunyu Kun. *SJ* 40. 170. For further information see Takigawa, 1999, p. 5033. This riddle appears also in the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 at the “Yulao” 喻老 chapter (story n. 19) *HFZ* 8/21. 973. In Liu Xiang 劉向’s *Xinxu* 新序 at the “Zashier” 雜事二 chapter, Chunyu Kun asks Zou Ji 鄒忌t hree more riddles; *XX* 2. 71-72. See also *LSCQ* 18/102. 6, translated by Schaberg 2005b, pp. 204-205.

[51] *SJ* 126. 3197-98. See “Tian Jing Zhong Wan shijia” 田敬仲完世家 chapter, *Shiji*, 46. 1888-1895 and “Mengzi Xunqing liezhuan” 孟子荀卿列傳 chapter, *SJ* 74. 2346.

king's intention to change his behaviour ("It may not have cried out yet, but once it does, it will astound everyone"). By the remonstrance, the ruler is transformed (pattern 5); he corrects his wrong behaviour so that his state, previously endangered by the attack of the feudal lord, is settled in peace and order.

The Jester Meng is the protagonist of the second story. He is described by Sima Qian as a musician with a ready tongue "who often remonstrated by means of jests (*tan xiao* 談笑)."[52] The story says:

> 楚莊王之時，有所愛馬，衣以文繡，置之華屋之下，席以露床，啗以棗脯。馬病肥死，使群臣喪之，欲以棺槨大夫禮葬之。左右爭之，以為不可。王下令曰："有敢以馬諫者，罪至死。"優孟聞之，入殿門。仰天大哭。王驚而問其故。優孟曰："馬者王之所愛也，以楚國堂堂之大，何求不得，而以大夫禮葬之，薄，請以人君禮葬之。"王曰："何如？"對曰："臣請以彫玉為棺，文梓為槨，楩楓豫章為題湊，發甲卒為穿壙，老弱負土，齊趙陪位於前，韓魏翼衛其后，廟食太牢，奉以萬戶之邑。諸侯聞之，皆知大王賤人而貴馬也。"王曰："寡人之過一至此乎！為之柰何？"優孟曰："請為大王六畜葬之。以壟竈為槨，銅歷為棺，齎以薑棗，薦以木蘭，祭以糧稻，衣以火光，葬之於人腹腸。"於是王乃使以馬屬太官，無令天下久聞也。
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> During the reign of King Zhuang of Chu (? –591), there was a horse that the king especially loved: he caparisoned with embroidered silk, housed in magnificent quarters, with a mat to sleep on and fed it upon dried jujubes. When the horse, being too fat, felt ill and died, the king ordered his ministers to arrange for it the funeral matters. He decided to have it buried in a double coffin with all the rites befitting a high official. Many of his courtiers opposed this, considering it inappropriate. The king decreed: "The one who dare to remonstrate on the matter of the horse, will be put to death." When the jester Meng heard about it, he went to the palace. He raised his eyes to heaven and cried loudly. The king was surprised and asked him the reason [of his crying]. The jester Meng said: "That horse was Your Majesty's favourite, a great state like Chu can be able to get everything done. However, to bury it with the rites befitting a high official is too ungenerous. Why don't you inhume it according to royal rites?" The King said: "How can it be done?" Meng replied: "Your

[52] 常以談笑諷諫, *SJ* 126. 3200.

> minister suggests that the inner coffin has to be made of carved jade and the outer coffin made of the finest catalpa's wood, and the layers that have to protect the coffin might be made of cedar, Sweetgum, camphor three and other precious wood. Send armoured soldiers to excavate the coffin pit, while the old and weak will carry earth. Let the envoys from Qi and Zhao stay ahead co–presiding the sacrificial rites, and the envoys of Han and Wei stay behind to protect.[53] Establish an ancestral temple,[54] sacrifice a *tailao*,[55] and institute a feud of ten thousand households to provide the offerings. [When] the feudal lords will hear of this, they will know that Your Majesty despises men but cherishes horses." The king said: "Did I go this far? What can I do?" The jester Meng said: "I request Your Majesty to bury the horse like the other livestocks.[56] Use the fireplace as its outer coffin and bronze cauldron[57] as its inner coffin, present it with ginger and jujubes and give it magnolia barks. Offer a sacrifice of glutinous rice, caparison it with flames and bury it in men's bellies!" So the king gave the horse to the official in charge of the Palace food, and didn't let the kingdom hear for long about this fact.[58]

According to the patterns previously analysed, initially there is a ruler who behaves in an inappropriate way. In this case, King Zhuang of Qi wants to bury his beloved horse according to the rites befitting high officials (pattern 1). The jester is the only one who dares to remonstrate against this behaviour. He introduces himself in the scene doing a gesture "that will draw attention to his figure of speech,"[59] he "looks up to the sky and cries aloud" (*yangtian daku* 仰天大哭).[60] Then the jester Meng stages a vivid description for the arrangement of the luxurious funeral ceremony for the horse (pattern 2). The king, who has first asked the jester the way to carry on the funeral, hearing the jester's plan (pattern 3), gradually understands the real message covered in his words. The king's question ("Did I go this far?") is the sign he has

[53] The *Shiji jijie* says that at the time of King Zhuang of Chu there were not such states like Zhao, Han and Wei. The *Shiji suoyin* states that maybe this passage is a later addition .
[54] To worship the deceased horse.
[55] The animals used in the *tailao* offering are an ox, a sheep and a pig.
[56] *Liuchu* 六畜 are the six domestic animals: the horse, the ox, the sheep, the chicken, the dog and the pig.
[57] The *Shiji suoyin* says that *li* 歷 is equal to *li* 鬲, a type of cooking tripod.
[58] *SJ* 126. 3200. Translated also by Schaberg 2005b, pp. 211-212.
[59] Schaberg, 2005b, p. 214.
[60] This gesture has the same rhetoric meaning of the "to look up to the sky and laugh hardly" (*yangtian daxiao* 仰天大笑) performed by Chunyu Kun in another anecdote of this chapter (*SJ* 126. 3198). It shows that the protagonist has a different position; he is in disagreement with the king's behaviour.

understood the remonstrance (pattern 4). Then, following the jester's advice, he will discharge his former plan (pattern 5) and will feed his courtiers with the horse meat.

The last story is very brief, so due to the brevity of the anecdote, its plot lacks narrative details. However, it still presents all the five patterns of the indirect remonstrance highlighted previously. The protagonist this time is the jester Zhan, a dwarf entertainer who served at the court of the First and Second Emperor of Qin. Sima Qian describes him as "good at making jokes (*xiao yan* 笑言) which, nevertheless, are in accordance with the Great *Dao's* teachings."[61] His story says as follows:

> 二世立，又欲漆其城。優旃曰："善。主上雖無言，臣固將請之。漆城雖於百姓愁費，然佳哉！漆城蕩蕩，寇來不能上。即欲就之，易為漆耳，顧難為蔭室。" 於是二世笑之，以其故止。
>
> When the Second Emperor (230–207 BC) came to the throne, he decided to lacquer the walls [of his capital]. The jester Zhan said: "Splendid! If you had not ordered this, Your minister would have certainly proposed it. Lacquer the walls, although it will cause suffering and costs to people, but what a fine thing it will be! A lacquered wall is so bright and shiny that if enemies come, they will not be able to climb it. If You desire it, it will be done, [but] lacquering is easy, the only difficulty will be building a shelter large enough to dry it." So the Second Emperor laughed at it (this wit), and gave up this idea.[62]

This story starts with the Second Emperor of Qin planning to lacquer the city–wall, an action which is understood as a useless excess (pattern 1). The Jester Zhan then, similarly to Jester Meng, pretends to agree with the Emperor's plan and vividly describes its realisation (pattern 2). The Emperor listens to his speech (pattern 3). Then he uncovers the critique. He laughs; this is the sign he has understood the real meaning of the jester's words (pattern 4). As Schaberg points out, the laugh marks the "moment of relief, when all obscurities are dispelled."[63] This story concludes, as the other two, with the ruler transformed by the remonstrant's speech, as the Second Emperor dismisses his plan (pattern 5).

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[61] 善為笑言，然合於大道, *SJ* 126. 3202.
[62] *SJ* 126. 3203.
[63] Schaberg, 2005b, p. 206.

The narration of the anecdotes is embellished by two typical rhetoric devices: the riddle,[64] and *fu*–like poetry,[65] expressed both by the remonstrant protagonists. From the stories narrated above, it is clear that the "guji"– humorous feature characteristic of the protagonists' speeches is understood as a rhetoric tool for persuasion. The words expressed by Chunyu Kun and the jesters are nearer to a harangue than to a *bon mot.* In particular, as far as the speeches of the two jesters are concerned, the remonstrants engage an argumentation by *reductio ad absurdum.*[66] First the jesters assume that the idea of the Lord is possible, and then they vividly describe the realisation of the assumption, showing that it leads to an absurd result. In the end it is shown that the idea can not be realised. This last step is left to the King. The remonstrants lead their lord to the reasoning, but they do not conclude the argumentation, they explain it in a way in which the last step, the implausibility of the idea, must be self evident so that the king is able to understand it by himself. This kind of argumentation is considered very effective, especially because it supposes irony and use of ridicule and humour. [67] Timoteus Pokora has pointed out that they used "wit, irony and satire in such a way as to achieve their aim without running into difficulties and eventual punishment."[68] However, this "humorous" quality is only a feature of their speech, in which aim is not to entertain but to educate.

As we can understand from the excerpts provided, even if two of the three protagonists are jesters, Sima Qian in reality had no interest in providing an exact and detailed historical data on the "jesters" included in this chapter, neither did he want to provide a definition of the "guji" as a distinct social category.[69] He instead

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[64] *SJ* 126. 3197. The riddle as a tool for indirect persuasion is found in other anecdotes, see *HFZ* 6. 799-800 and *ZGC* 8. 209. See also the note above.

[65] *SJ* 126. 3199. Hu Shiying and Wang Yunxi both state that the remonstrance by which Chunyu Kun made The King of Qi cut drinking is a piece of *fu* poetry. See Hu Shiying, 1980, p. 9; Wang Yunxi, 2002, pp. 289-90.

[66] This particular was noticed by Qian Zhongshu (1979, p. 378).

[67] Jansen, 2007, p. 2.

[68] Pokora, 1973, p. 59. Kang Qinglian, echoing the title of one of the chapter of Liu Xiang's *Shuiyuan* 說苑 (for this text see Chapter 2. 1. 2), the "Shui nan" 說難 or the "Difficulties of the persuasion," defines the speeches of the protagonists of this chapter as *shui bu nan* 說不難, "persuasion which are not difficult." See Kang Qinglian 康清蓮, 2002, "Cong guji renwu de 'shui bu nan' kan youshui de wenhua fangshi," 從滑稽人物的"說不難"看游說的文化方式in *Xi Nan minzu xueyuan xuebao*, Vol. 23, No. 11, pp. 126-128.

[69] As a proof, his clearly imprecise dating of the events. Introducing the Jester Meng story, he recorded: "More than a hundred years after this happened," (*SJ* 126. 3200) and Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 states that the jester Meng lived two hundred years before Chunyu Kun, and not after him. Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩 says that from the reign of King Zhuang of Chu to that of King Wei of Qi passed 271 years. See Takigawa, 1999, p. 5036; and again: "More than two hundred years later, at Qin there was the

recorded tales of different figures placed in a historical background with the aim to illustrate exempla of worthy relations between a lord and his subjects (be them jesters or *shi*). He dedicated this biography, then, to those people who, according to him, shared the *guji* quality, understood as the capacity to express an indirect remonstrance (*fengjian* 諷諫) by an entertaining way of speech and behaviour.[70] The protagonists of this chapter use speeches with the quality of *guji* in order to elucidate a moral issue and move the decision of their ruler in the right direction.

This specific chapter is peculiar in the context of the *Shiji* because it contains also a long part added by Chu Sahosun.[71] The authority of the whole chapter actually has been questioned. Derk Bodde[72] has stated that the first part of the chapter was not written by Sima Qian, citing as proof that it appears the taboo character *tan* 談, Sima father's name. The character is truly found four times, three of which in the part supposedly written by Sima Qian. According to Bodde's remarks, this evidence could place this chapter in an effective dangerous situation. Nevertheless, the anecdotes are constructed following the narrative tradition of Warring States period tales. This is a distinctive mark of Sima Qian way of writing.[73] We have to notice also that Zhang Dake, one of the most famous specialists in the *Shiji*'s textual

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jester Zhan," (*SJ* 126. 3202); and Cui Shi 崔適 says that, according to history, Zhan lived 378 years after the jester Meng; Takigawa, 1999, p. 5041.

[70] Martin Kern, citing this *Shij*'s chapter, rightly translates "guji" as "eloquent wits," which generally identifies an ability of arguing an idea in a convincing manner; Kern, 2003a, p. 308.

[71] *SJ* 126. 3203-3210.

[72] Bodde, 1967, pp. 110-11. Martin Kern, on his article about Sima Xiangru, bases one of his proof to demonstrate the later dating of the chapter, on the appearance of the tabooed character of Sima father's name, *tan*; Kern 2003a, p. 309.

[73] We might also notice that in the commentary of the *Fayan* 法言, written by the Han dynasty scholar Yang Xiong (53 BC–18 AD), we find a phrase referred to Dongfang Shuo (a character that appears in Chu's addition) which says: "the humorous men have the way of speaking and behaving characteristic of the humorous men;" *FY* 17. 483. Chinese trans. Li Shoukui and Hong Yuqin, 2003, p. 180. The text records *tan yan tan xin* 談言談行that is glossed as *hui yan hui xing* 詼言詼行 (literally: funny words funny behaviour), because the commentary says that *tan* 談, in reality, is a mistake for *hui* 詼; *FY* 17. 486. The commentary then says that the character "tan" found in the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan" could be the same case of erroneous transmission; *FY* 17. 486. It is true that all the three occurrences would still make a coherent meaning with the two characters exchanged. The first occurrence is at the beginning of the chapter: "Even sayings that are subtle and tortuous may hit the target and serve to settle disputes," 談言微中，亦可以解紛; *SJ* 126. 3197; this will change in: "Even humorous words can tortuously and subtly hit the target;" ("humorous" must always been understood in a broad sense). Another one regards the second protagonist of the chapter: "[The jester Meng] was good in arguments and often indirectly admonished the king speaking in a funny way" 多辯，常以談笑諷諫, *SJ* 126. 3200. This would be: "[The jester Meng] was good in arguments and often, being humorous, indirectly admonished the king." The third, and last, occurrence by Sima Qian records: "[The jester Meng] wore Sunshu Ao's clothes and hat, and clapping his hands [began to] talk (we suppose that he is trying to imitate Sunshu's way of speaking)" 即為孫叔敖衣冠，抵掌談語, *SJ* 126 3201. This will be transformed in: "[The jester Meng] wore Sunshu Ao's clothes and hat, and clapping his hands joked with words."

exegesis, never questioned the authenticity of the first part of the chapter.[74] Therefore, I would still ascribe the authorship of this chapter to Sima Qian.

Sima's *Shiji* was a private work. He was not appointed by Emperor Wu to write a history of the Han dynasty; alike the texts of Warring Sates period, as for example the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (a work that heavily weighted on Sima's work),[75] his arrangement of history was not controlled by the imperial political authority. According to what we can understand from the anecdotes of the "Guji liezhuan," it seems that he conceived this chapter as a piece of indirect remonstrance itself. Chunyu Kun and the other protagonists used their rhetoric skills trying to influence the conduct of their kings, analogously Sima Qian, recording the deeds of those men who dared to criticise their ruler, is sending a message to his Emperor, showing which kind of relationship had to be between the lord and his ministers. It is well known that Sima Qian received a harsh punishment only because he spoke in defence of the general Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 BC) who was defeated after a campaign against the Xiongnu.[76] It is also not a case, maybe, that he did not include in his narration facts about his own times, especially the records about Dongfang Shuo 東方朔,[77] whose wits were well famous at court but were judged shallow of morality by his contemporaries. [78] Sima is speaking about an idealised past, a past in which the ministers were able to express their idea even if in an indirect way, and their lords were listening to them.[79]

It is true that in this chapter, two of the three protagonists are jesters. The fact that the indirect remonstrance is expressed by jesters, as sometimes other ancient

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[74] Zhang Dake questioned some parts of the *Shiji* in his *Shii wenxian yanjiu* 史記文獻研究 (that has been incorporated in the collectanea edited by him and quoted here), but never raised doubts about this chapter, see Zhang Dake, 2005, pp. 108-137; see also An Pingqiu 2005, pp. 451-463.
[75] See Kern 2003c, p. 289.
[76] *HS* 62.
[77] See Chapter 1. 2. 2.
[78] This interpretation has been inspired by a conference held at my university on January 2009 by Professor Hans Van Ess about the order of some chapter of the *Shiji*. Already Pokora has noticed: "[Sima Qian] did not find under the Han any personality who, in his opinion, would have been able to offer bold criticism under the existing strong political and ideological pressures;" Pokora 1973, p. 54.
[79] Sima Qian, in his work, often uses the pattern of portraying figures of the past in an exemplary way; on the contrary, regarding the people of his time, especially those intellectuals summoned by the Emperor Wu of Han, he does not cover a harsh criticism. It can be taken as an example the way in which he describes Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (d. 121 BC), the first *ru*-scholar who served as prime minister (*chengxiang* 丞相) under Emperor Wu. In spite of his fame as an erudite, Sima Qian describes him as double faces-man; see *SJ* 112. 2951. See also Shankman Steven, and Stephen Durrant, 2000, pp. 131-132.

texts recorded,[80] somehow confused some scholars making them think that to counsel and critic the sovereign were important jester's duties. [81] As Schaberg has argued, indirect remonstrance had "no history as a political practice, instead it came into being as a literary phenomenon, as part of the lore transmitted by educated elites of the late Warring States and early imperial era,"[82] and "tales of indirect remonstrance were the fictional invention of the *shi* (men of service) and reflect the development within that group of a self–conscious conception of its identity and its relation to the imperial power."[83] Therefore, I would state that the stories recorded by Sima, conformed to the Warring States tradition that presents a jester as the protagonist of a remonstrance, are fictional products of the historian.[84] The character of the jester is chosen among those people who were present at court, according to a literary variation of the stories. Sima Qian in this chapter, following *Zuozhuan* narrative patterns, arranges the events to show a substantiate judgment which is in this case addressed to the Emperor. On purpose, he was not interested in the historical accuracy of these stories. All the narration was in support of present polemical need.[85]

We previously saw that the commentator Cui Hao identified *guji* as a drinking vessel. In the image of the wine that constantly flows we find the allusion to the jester's language skill, to his being able to talk endlessly. This explanation fits completely with the stories added by Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 (c.105–c. 30 BC) at the end of Sima Qian's part.[86] Chu records stories more for the sake of amusing the reader than teaching him by a tale of remonstrance; the protagonists speak in a witty and clever way, in which moral aims are rarely involved.[87] Then, leaving aside Sima

[80] See for example the records about Jester Shi 優施 in the *Guoyu* 國語 at the "Jin yu" 晉語 section, *GY* pp. 226-28.
[81] Schaberg, 2005b, p. 195; Hong Zhiyuan, 2006a, p. 54. Nowadays Chinese scholars still regard -to advice the ruler about political matters- as a traditional *paiyou*'s duty only because Sima Qian described them like this; see Wang Huanran, 2003, 18.
[82] Schaberg, 2005b, p. 194.
[83] Schaberg 2005b, pp. 194-195.
[84] About the *shi* 士 as the class that produced and transmitted the anecdotal tradition see Yuri Pines, 2009, *Envisioning eternal empire : Chinese political thought of the Warring States era*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii press. His discussion is referred in a more general way to all the tales of indirect remonstrance, in which we also find the anecdotes with the jester-character, see in particular pp. 115-184; see also Schaberg 2005b, pp. 194-195.
[85] For this view applied to *Zuozhuan* narratives see Schaberg 2005a, pp. 177-180.
[86] *SJ* 126. 3203-3210.
[87] Pokora, 1973, p. 54, p. 57.

Qian's part, the language ability of the jester might be understood as his competence at being a good storyteller, being able to tell amusing and entertaining stories that can please the ruler. In this sense, Feng's definition of "guji yuren" can still be used if the word *guji* is interpreted as the ability to talk (in this regard the contents of the talk are stories, riddles, jokes, etc.) non–stop, and without the implication of a remonstrance.

1. 1. 3. *Zhuangzi*'s *zhiyan*, jester–like words.

The "Yuyan" 寓言 is maybe the most difficult chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子.[88] Western scholarship in the past had neglected it because, since it was part of the Miscellaneous chapter, it was not considered an expression of the original thought of the philosopher Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (ca. 369–286 BC).[89] Nowadays, some researchers have adopted a much more comprehensive approach, recognizing the importance of this chapter to understand *Zhuangzi*'s discourse on language.[90] The chapter, in fact, poses the problem of the language itself as an imperfect medium to convey meanings and has a strong connection with the "Qiwu lun" 齊物論, [91] one of the Inner chapters. In the "Yuyan" is figured out a language that is placed out of the categories of right and wrong and true and false, and that lets itself self–emerge like all phenomena of nature.[92] Such kind of language is defined by three kinds of saying: the *yuyan* 寓言, or metaphors; the *zhongyan* 重言 or quotations; and *zhiyan* 卮言 or impromptu words.[93] The three modes of discourse are not three different kinds of speeches[94] (as the sequence of presentation in the chapter could let may suppose it), they overlap.[95] In particular, the *zhiyan*–mode of discourse, acquires a crucial

[88] Mair, 1994, p. 278. *ZZ* 27. 947-64. Transl. Mair, 1994, pp. 278-83.
[89] See the critics towards Chad Hansen and Graham's approaches in Wang Youru 2003, p. 140, p. 214 n. 3.
[90] Wang Youru, 2003, *Linguistic strategies in Daoist Zhuangzi and Chan Buddhism*, New York, RoutledgeCurzon, in particular pp. 139-160; Eske Mollgaard, 2007, *An Introduction to Daoist thought: action, language and ethics in Zhuangzi*, New York, Routledge, in particular pp. 80-84.
[91] Liu Xiaogan identifies the passages of the "Yuyan " chapter (part of the Miscellaneous chapters), which have a direct relation with passages of the Inner chapters, see Liu Xiaogan, 1994, pp. 89, 116-117.
[92] Mollgaard, 2007, p. 71.
[93] Mair, 1994, p. 278.
[94] Bian Jiazhen, 2002, p. 96.
[95] Wang Youru, 2003, p. 140.

importance because is the more suitable to express the words that are in harmony with the *dao* (exemplified by the image of the *tianni* 天倪, the framework of nature).[96] Recently, several Chinese scholars have studied in depth *zhiyan* mode of discourse, trying to delineate its extra–textual context. Above all, Guo Changbao and Hou Wenhua have linked this last kind of speech with the *paiyou* character.[97] Their article comes as an answer to Li Binghai's thesis, which identifies *zhiyan* as "the augural words pronounced during a toast."[98] Li Binghai's argumentation starts from the explanation given by Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312 AD), and then by Cheng Xuanying 成玄應 (fl. 630 AD), which identifies in the term *zhi* 巵 of *zhiyan*, a drinking vessel (*jiu qi* 酒器).[99] Li states that during Warring States period *zhi* and *zhi* 觶 (another kind of recipient for wine) were already interchangeable words. So if *zhi* 巵 is *zhi* 觶, *zhiyan* 巵言 is equal to *zhiyan* 觶言; this last word indicates the words pronounced raising a cup of wine (*yang zhi* 揚觶), a "toast speech."[100] Guo and Huo completely reject this assumption. They say that the toast speeches were made only during an official banquet that, under Zhou dynasty, was a serious matter requiring formality.[101] This required formality does not fit with the description of *zhiyan* given by *Zhuangzi*'s chapter. Hereafter, we are going to analyse a part of the "Yuyan" chapter according to their explanations:

> 巵言日出，和以天倪，因以曼衍，所以窮年。不言則齊，齊與言不齊，言與齊不齊也，故曰無言。言無言，終身言，未嘗言；終身不言，未嘗不言。有自也而可，有自也而不可；有自也而然，有自也而不然。惡乎然？然於然。惡乎不然？不然於不然。惡乎可？可於可。惡乎不可？不可於不可。物固有所然，物固有所可，無物不然，無物不可。非巵言日出，和以天倪，孰得其久！萬物皆種也，以不同形相禪，始卒若環，莫得其倫，是謂天均。天均者，天倪也。

[96] *ZZ* 27. 949; Bian Jiazhen, 2002, p. 95.
[97] Guo Changbao and Hou Wenhua, 2007, "Lun 'Zhuangzi''zhiyan' ji 'youyu'" 論莊子巵言即優語, in *Beijing schifan daxue xuebao*, n. 4, pp. 28-33.
[98] Li Binghai, 1996, "*Zhaungzi* de zhiyan yu xian Qin zhujiuci" 《莊子》的巵言與先秦祝酒辭, in *Shehui kexue zhanxian* (Wen Yi xue yanjiu), 1, pp. 191-196; in particular p. 193.
[99] *ZZ* 27. 947, n. 3.
[100] Li Binghai, 1996, p. 192.
[101] Guo and Hou, 2007, p. 29.

> Impromptu words pour forth every day and harmonize within the framework of nature (*tianni*). Consequently, there is a graceful overflow (*manyan*)[102] so that they may live out their years. Without speech, there is equality. Equality plus speech yields inequality; speech plus equality yields inequality. Therefore, it is said, "Speak nonspeech." If you speak non speech, you may speak till the end of your life without ever having spoken. If till the end of your life you do not speak, you will never have failed to speak. There are grounds for affirmation and there are grounds for denial. There are grounds for saying that something is so and there are grounds for saying that something is not so. Why are the things so? They are so because we declare them to be so. Why are things not so? They are not so because we declare them to be not so. Wherein lies affirmation? Affirmation lies in our affirming. Wherein lies denial? Denial lies in our denying. All things are possessed of that which we may say is so; all things are possessed of that which we affirm. There is no thing that is not so; there is no thing that is not affirmable. If it were not for the impromptu words that pour forth every day and harmonize within the framework of nature, which kind of language could last long?[103] The myriad things are all from seeds, and they succeed each other because of their different forms. From start to finish it is like a circle whose seam is not to be found. This is called the celestial potter's wheel (*tian jun*), and the celestial potter's wheel is the framework of nature.[104]

In this passage, it is not explained from which context *zhiyan* mode of speech comes, but it is described *zhiyan*'s pattern of expression and its use. According to the description, *zhiyan*'s mode of speech is characterized by words that "gently overflow" (*manyan* 曼衍) and "succeed each other because of their different forms" (*yi butong xinxiang shan* 以不同形相禪). Chen Guying explains these two features as "overflowing in a careless and sloppy way, regardless the conventions,"[105] and as "being connected each other in different ways."[106] Chen Xuanying, in the commentary, already specified that *zhiyan*'s feature is to be an "unintentionally language" (*wuxin zhi yan* 無心之言),[107] in which *wuxin*–characteristic of discourse

[102] The translation of *manyan* is given in Coutinho, 2004, p. 158; Mair translates it as "effusive elaboration," but I feel that the term "elaboration" does not fit with the spontaneity of this language.
[103] Mair translates "who could last long;" but, according to Chen Guying's translation this passage refers to *zhiyan* way of speech, so I follow his understanding; see Chen Guying, 1983, p. 732.
[104] *ZZ* 27. 949-50; Mair 1994, p. 279.
[105] Chen Guying, 1983, p. 730, n. 15.
[106] Chen Guying, 1983, p. 731, n. 24.
[107] *ZZ* 27. 947, n. 3

means that it is a mode of speech unprincipled. Chen also stated that *zhi* 卮 means *zhi* 支, a language that is fragmented, incoherent and disorganized (*zhili qi yan* 支離其言).[108] All the cited explanations, in the end, specify the *manyan*– characteristic of the *zhiyan*– mode of speech. Guo and Hou then stress that *yan bu yan* 言不言, *ran yu ran* 然於然, and *ke yu ke* 可於可, are all explanations of *manyan*, as a language that is sloppy and pointless.[109] The other image, given by both Guo Xiang and Chen Xuanying, which sees in *zhi* 卮 a drinking vessel, is still connected to the *manyan*–characteristic. Z*hi* is described as a goblet for wine that overflows when full and rights itself when empty, and this movement never stops. Therefore, Guo and Hou point out that this image actually wants to express an analogy between *zhiyan* way of speech and the behaviour and customs linked to drinking liquor. This is the basis on which also Li Binhai has founded his thesis. Nevertheless, the toast speech had an unequivocal ceremonial and rules to which conform, and this formality can not fit with the *manyan* way of speech previously described. Guo and Hou, then, as we said, reject Li's thesis, moreover, affirming that Li's textual examples are not records of official banquets but of private ones. Regarding these private banquets then, it is possible to talk about their recreational nature but not about "toast speeches." They propose then another explanation. Hong Zhiyuan, in an earlier article, [110] has already noted a connection between *Zhuangzi*'s fables and the stories narrated by the *paiyou*, but did not rise to attention *zhiyan* way of speech. Starting from his comments, Guo and Hou state that *zhiyan* is in reality the speech of the *paiyou* during a banquet. [111] They quote several anecdotes in which a jester character is involved during a banquet. In particular, they quote three anecdotes from *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan."[112] The fact that Sima Qian created a chapter with jesters as protagonists and called it "guji" is not coincidental, they say. In the previous paragraph, we have seen that one of the commentator of the *Shiji*, Cui Hao,

[108] *ZZ* 27. 947, n. 3.
[109] Guo and Hou, 2007, p. 29.
[110] Hong Zhiyuan 洪之渊, 2006, "Paiyou yu Zhuangzi de wenzhang fengge" 俳優與《莊子》的文章風格 in *Wenxue yichan*, No. 1, pp. 137-140.
[111] About this point, I think that they assume that the performance of the *paiyou*, contrary to guests' speeches, did not change according to the type of the banquet, but was somehow similar for formal and private one. The textual materials regarding their performances are so scarce that we can only make suppositions.
[112] The dialogue of Chunyu Kun and Duke Wei of Qi during a banquet, *SJ* 126. 1399; the anecdote regarding jester Meng and the case of Sunshu Ao, *SJ* 126. 3201-02; and one about jester Zhan and the guards, *SJ* 126. 3202.

understood *guji* as a drinking vessel. Therefore, they suppose that the jesters, and in particular their speeches, were compared to a drinking vessel because the they were present during the banquets, pouring out their witty sayings and jokes. The never–ending flux of entertaining stories, which was part of their performance, was then naturally compared to the flux of the wine that inexhaustibly comes out of a drinking vessel during a feast. [113] They finally state that *zhiyan* is actually *youyu* 優語, the "speech of a jester." So it is because *zhiyan* is the language of a jester that it can be *manyan* in shape and can "last long" (*yi qiong nian*), which is understood as "a language so amusing that can idle away the time."[114] I found their argumentation very interesting, but their final statement that sees in the *Zhuangzi*'s chapter the most precise and appropriate description of the jester's language, has some problems. They seem to take "Yuyan" chapter as a reliable historical source to define a context out of the text that, in reality, is not given at all. In this *Zhuangzi*'s chapter, in fact, the setting of the *zhiyan* speech is never specified, nor it appears indicated who used it to speak. There are no textual evidence in these passages to state that the description of a banquet is involved; nor the words *you*, *chang* and *pai*, which could identify the "jester"'s presence, ever appear. In their article, Guo and Huo also take for granted that Sima Qian's "Guji" chapter is a trustful account of the jester's duty.[115] I do not think that we can affirm in any way that in this *Zhuangzi*'s chapter there is the description of the jester's way of speech. We can notice instead the adjectives by which the *zhiyan* kind of speech is defined. The *manyan*–sloppy and pointless definition well describes a type of carefree language not voted to a rational definition of the concepts. In the *Zhuangzi,* this way of speech is chosen because, in its not being straightforward, is able to avoid distinguishing normally involved in disputation.[116] *Zhiyan* represents then the "most important way to say the unsayable, for these words hover in–between saying something and saying nothing and precisely therefore they are able to speak the inherently so of the world before it has been differentiated in the language of disputation."[117] This is the daoist way to understand *manyan* quality of *zhiyan*–speech; nevertheless, in a more general way, out of a philosophical context, *manyan*–feature could refer to a kind of speech that is not

[113] Guo and Huo, 2007, p. 31.
[114] Guo and Huo, 2007, p. 31.
[115] They, moreover, bring out Dongfang Shuo character as he was the same kind of figure. We will analyse Dongfang Shuo's figure in the next paragraph.
[116] Mollgaard, 2007, p. 78.
[117] Mollgaard, 2007, p. 81.

concerned in sustain an argument. In this view, then, it could be applied also to the speech of a jester.

The comparison of *zhiyan*'s function to a goblet that constantly pours alcohol indicates how *Zhuangzi*'s language "adapt to and follow along with the fluctuating nature of the world and thus achieve a state of harmony;"[118] this is related to *zhiyan*'s definition of being *richu* 日出 or "to become new every day."[119] Chen Guying, in his translation, defines it as *buqiong* 不窮 "without stop".[120] This language that endlessly changes in an inexhaustible flux, is the only one that can be in harmony with the *dao*,[121] because in its comprising of the oppositions (*ran bu ran, ke bu ke*..), it eludes all objectifications,[122] flowing spontaneously like all phenomena of nature. Here, as Guo and Hou rightly point out, it is possible to note the similarity between the description of *Zhuangzi*'s language that flows endlessly and the *guji* language of the jesters (described by *Shiji*'s commentaries). The jester's language shares with *Zhuangzi*'s language a not–argumentative nature, but the absurd expressions, the extravagant words, and the unbordered phrases that in *Zhuangzi*'s are employed to elude a straightforward language not conform to the *dao*,[123] in the jester's speech are finalized to entertain. At the same time, we can note that because in *Zhuangzi* such a kind of language is employed (even if it has a philosophical aim), the text results also successfully entertaining. Considering the fact that, as far as ancient Chinese literature is concerned, there were not distinct categories that divided philosophical from literary texts (in modern understanding), we can agree then with Lu Xun in defining the *Zhuangzi* as "one of the greatest works in the tradition of Chinese literature." [124]

[118] Wang Youru, 2003, p. 141; Watson, 1968, 303, note 1.
[119] *ZZ* 27. 947, n. 1; 27. 950, n. 1.
[120] Chen Guying (1983, p. 731) translates: "Impromptu words come out every day without stop" 無心之言日出不窮. Zhong Tai, in his *Zhuangzi fawei* 莊子發微, also glosses *ri chu* with *bu qiong*; Zhong Tai, 1988, p. 649.
[121] Wang Youru, 2003, p. 143.
[122] Mollgaard, 2007, p. 67.
[123] Wang Youru, 2003, pp. 143-44.
[124] Lu Xun, 2005, p. 375. In the *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, the *Zhuangzi* is defined as "the most important pre-Qin text for the study of Chinese literature;" Mair, 1998, p. 20. Graham also noted: "[Zhuangzi] uses words not like a philosopher but like poet, sensitive to their richness, exploiting their ambiguities, letting conflicting meanings explode against each other in apparent contradiction;" Graham 1981, p. 26.

The *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan" and *Zhuangzi*'s "Yuyan" chapter, have been mentioned for their connections, or alleged connections, with the jester's figure and the quality of his speech. In an excursus aimed to determine jester figure's qualities, both texts could not be leaved out.

In other textual materials, the presence at court of the *you* is attested until the Wei period. During the Jin dynasty there is scarce information about their entertaining activities,[125] but already in the accounts of the Eastern Han dynasty they had lost their active role in the stories. They were no more described as characters, whose speeches convened moral and didactic teachings. They were no more the protagonists or an important characters of anecdotes (as they were instead in the *Shiji*). Later, they basically appear only described in their entertaining duties.[126]

It is also important to stress that even one acknowledges the jesters' performances of storytelling, this performance did not have a literary implication. According to what is known through extant texts, there is no evidence of literary composition by jester authors. There is no trace that the amusing stories that were part of their tools for entertainment were written down by them in a textual form; their activity was confined to oral performance.

To recap thus far, the *paiyou*, or jesters, were present at the court of the lords from the time of the Warring States period, they had a low social position, and one of their abilities was to make the sovereign laugh with clever wit, jokes and funny stories.[127]

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[125] Wang Guowei, 1998, p. 6.

[126] An exemplar anecdote, which could illustrates how *you*-characters appears in later times records, is found in one passage of the *Weishi chunqiu* 魏氏春秋, as quoted in the commentary of the *Sanguozhi*. In this story the ministers around Cao Fang 曹芳 (232–274 AD), third emperor of the state of Wei, suggested him to kill Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (d. 265 AD), and persuaded him to sign a document which authorized this plan. One day Sima Zhao arrived at court during a banquet. The jester (*you*) Yun Wu 雲午was doing his performance with other musicians. Once the jester saw Sima Zhao, he said: "black head chicken (*qing tou ji* 青頭雞), black head chicken." The commentary explains: "Black head chicken, means *ya* 鴨, 'goose.' The emperor was frightened and did not dare to say a word" 青頭雞，青頭雞。"青頭雞者，鴨也。帝懼不敢發; *SGZ* 4. 128, n. 1. Here *ya* 鴨 is homophone of *ya* 押 (*jianya* 签押 "put one's seal on"). The jester wanted then to warn Cao Fang not to sign the document to kill Sima Zhao. Even if we could say that the jester is trying to advise Cao Fang, he says only few words during his performance. His part in the story is quickly exhausted.

[127] To have an exhaustive presentation of other literature on the topic of "paiyou," see: Hong Zhiyuan 洪之淵, 2006, "Xian Qin Liang Han paiyou mantan" 先秦兩漢俳優漫談, in *Wenshi zhishi*, No. 7, pp. 50-57.

1. 2. Western Han times—— the poet as a jester

During the Han dynasty other kind of figures were compared to the *paiyou*; those were writers such as Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (c. 161–86 BC) and Mei Gao 枚皋 (fl. 130–110 BC), poets specialised in *fu* 賦 (rhapsody) who stayed at court at the time of Emperor Wu (r.141–87 BC). In the Han period the *fu* became a central court genre, and gradually passed from being a composition with features similar to a piece of persuasive rhetoric of Warring States period,[128] to be a work based on verbal embellishment, playful fictionalization, ornamental rhetoric and whose aim was primarily to delight the listener and, maybe, the reader.[129] The poets were required to write poems for several special occasions of the court's life: as an imperial hunt, the construction of a park or even the birth of the crown prince,[130] and they were employed to eulogise the imperial majesty and to gratify Emperor Wu's need to hear his accomplishment lauded. The source of our information is the "Yiwenzhi" 藝文志, included in the *Hanshu* 漢書 written by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 AD). The "Yiwenzhi" was compiled rearranging in a shorter version Liu Xin 劉歆's (46 BC–23 AD) "Qi lüe" 七略, which was already an abridged version of Liu Xiang 劉向's (77–6 BC) "Bie lu" 別錄.[131] The chapter records approximately one thousand rhapsodies, testifying to how popular this genre was popular during Han times.[132] Thus, in Western Han times, the word *fu*, probably, was not indicating a well defined category, or stable genre of poetry, but "any type of longer verbal 'presentation' […] that was distinguished from plain speech or prose by its particular poetic form,"[133] and differentiated from the *shi* poetry by the fact that it did not involve music.[134] We

[128] For a brief survey about the *fu* written during the first period of Han dynasty see Knechtges, 1976, pp. 21-31. On the editors of the "Yiwenzhi" see Zeng Yifen 曾貽芬, Cui Wenyin 崔文印, 2000, *Zhongguo lishi wenxian xueshi shuyao*中國曆史文獻學史述要, Beijing, Shangwu yinshuguan, pp. 35-56.

[129] Martin Kern stresses that the main feature of the *fu* poetry in Western Han China was its performative and orality based nature; Martin Kern, 2003b.

[130] *HS* 51. 2365.

[131] *HS* 30. 1701.

[132] *HS* 30. 1747-1755.

[133] Kern, 2003b, p. 401.

[134] This is the only definition we find at the end of the "Shifulue" 詩賦略 section of the chapter, and it is introduced by the formula "the tradition says" (*zhuan yue* 傳曰). The text states: "To recite without singing is called *fu*" (*bu ge er yong wei zhi fu* 不歌而誦謂之賦); *HS* 30. 1755.

suppose, then, that the *fu* was a composition that owned a performative mode and a recitative character. [135] The audience was the ruler and his courtiers who enjoyed the writings, not through individual reading, but via an oral performance. Due to the scarce information found about these activities in the textual material available, it is unknown who performed it, whether the poet himself or some other attendant. Martin Kern supposes that "the dialogical format of many *fu* that created an arena of rhetorical competition even suggests polyvocal performances, or at least theatrical techniques to represent the different voices."[136] Sadly, only approximately one tenth of the real production of the time is preserved,[137] and this precludes a deep insight into the poetical motifs and themes and the overall meaning of these pieces. Still, from the information available, we can affirm that *fu* poetry in Han times owned entertaining features.

In the *Hanshu* several descriptions of the court's atmosphere of this period can be found;[138] one records:

> 其尤親幸者，東方朔、枚皋、嚴助、吾丘壽王、司馬相如。相如常稱疾避事。朔、皋不根持論，上頗俳優之。
>
> Therefore among the Emperor's favourite officers there were Dongfang Shuo, Mei Gao, Yan Zhu, [139] Wuqiu Shouwang[140] and Sima Xiangru. Sima Xiangru often avoid his duties pretending to be sick, while Dongfang and Mei Gao were no good at sustaining an argument and were kept [at court] as jesters.[141]

From this brief description it is evident that Emperor Wu had several "favourite officers" (*qinxing* 親幸). According to their biographies, most of them were also prolific *fu* writers. The "Yiwenzhi" in fact records a large number of this kind of composition, but, as mentioned previously, only a few are extant. Moreover, the texts

[135] Knechtges, 2008, p. 79.
[136] Kern, 2010, p. 91.
[137] Ma Jigao, 2001, p. 55.
[138] Sima Qian did not write records about *fu* poetry (the biography of Sima Xiangru is judged by most scholars as spurious, see Kern, 2003a) even if the most famous poets were his contemporaries; for this issue see Kern, 2003b, pp. 398-402.
[139] Known in other texts as Zhuang Zhu 莊助 (the *Hanshu* changed *zhuang* in *yan* because Zhuang was the name of the Emperor Ming). He was a famous *fu* writer from Kuaiji 會稽 prefecture, in the Wu 吳 county (today Suzhou city in the Jiangsu province). The passage comes from his *Hanshu's* biography, *HS* 64. 2775-2790.
[140] Wuqiu Shouwang, whose courtesy name was Zigan 子贛, was a *fu* poet from Zhao 趙, *HS* 64. 2794.
[141] *HS* 64. 2775.

listed are probably only a small part of the real production of the time,[142] because they were chosen according to a selective criteria shared by the two Liu and followed later by Ban Gu, so that the real picture of the situation can only be partial. [143] The case of Mei Gao is exemplary. There were one hundred and twenty *fu* ascribed to him,[144] but there is no doubt there were many others that have been voluntarily not recorded. In fact, Ban Gu in Mei's biography states: "Of those worthy of being read, there were one hundred and twenty [*fu*]; among those that were too frivolous to be worthy of reading, several dozen" 凡可讀者百二十篇，其尤女曼戲不可讀者尚數十篇;[145] clearly judging quite negatively some of Mei's literary compositions.

The *Hanshu* put those kind of "frivolous" poems that appeared to have as their primary aim, only to amuse, in an ambiguous light; it was even less indulgent towards their authors. It will be seen that the historian in the displays of the narrative agrees on the "jester like" epithet for those kinds of writers. In the *Hanshu*'s passage, *paiyou* is clearly used in a depreciative way, bearing a meaning of slave–subject, completely submitted to the Emperor's will, and only able to tell jokes and talks about unserious matters, a tool of divertissement in the hand of the authority and nothing more. However, it is not necessary that Ban Gu's view truthfully represents the original literary atmosphere present at the court of Emperor Wu; alternatively, it may represent it but according to the dominant literary perspective in vogue during Eastern Han times, so this representation can be partial and must be read carefully.

[142] Hellmut Willhelm, 1957, "The Scholar's Frustration: Notes on a Type of *Fu*," in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank, Chicago, The University of Chicago press, pp. 310-19, notes pp. 398-403.
[143] A criteria of selection has been pointed out by Martin Kern about the songs that are recorded in the Bibliographical chapter. He hypothesized that the songs listed in the "Yiwenzhi" were those performed by the Office of Music (*yuefu* 樂府); Kern, 2004, p. 38.
[144] *HS* 30. 1748.
[145] *HS* 51. 2367.

1. 2. 1. Mei Gao

Mei Gao, was one of Emperor Wu's "favourite," and his biography in the *Hanshu* is attached at the end of the biography of the famous poet Mei Cheng 枚乘 (?–140 BC), Mei Gao's father. [146]

> 皋字少孺，乘在梁時，取皋母為小妻。乘之東歸也，皋母不肯隨乘，乘怒，分皋數千錢，留與母居。年十七，上書梁共王，得召為郎。三年，為王使，與冗從爭，見讒惡遇罪，家室沒入。皋亡至長安。會赦，上書北闕，自陳枚乘之子。上得大喜，召入見待詔，皋因賦殿中。詔使賦平樂館，善之。拜為郎，使匈奴。皋不通經術，詼笑類俳倡，為賦頌好嫚戲，以故得媟黷貴幸，比東方朔、郭舍人等，而不得比嚴助等得尊官。
>
> Gao's courtesy name was Shaoru. [Mei] Cheng, when in Liang, took Gao's mother as a concubine. When he decided to go back to the East, Gao's mother refused to follow him. Cheng, angered, allotted more than one thousand coins [for] Gao, and left him to live with his mother. At seventeen years old, [Mei Gao] sent a memorial to Prince Gong of Liang and was appointed as a gentleman (*lang*). Three years later he was appointed as an envoy (*shi*). He quarrelled with some prince's attendants who had sinecure positions at court; he [then] was the target of false accusations, and his proprieties were confiscated. Gao escaped to Chang'an. After being pardoned, he submitted a memorial to the imperial court where he presented himself as the son of Mei Cheng. The Emperor was greatly pleased and summoned him to court as his attendant (*daizhao*);[147] Gao, because he mastered the *fu*,[148] entered the court. He was in charge of writing a *fu* on the Pingle Palace[149] which was very appreciated. He received the official post of gentleman (*lang*) and was sent as an envoy to the Xiongnu. Gao was not well versed in classical learning and

[146] A famous scholar and writer of *fu* poetry and author of the *Qifa* 七發, *HS* 51. 2359-2365.

[147] *Daizhao* during Han dynasty was not a formal position among the organized official system, it was bestowed to the man of learning. According to Hucker (1985, p. 475, entry n°6127): "Basically someone serving, or expecting to serve, in a post requiring an imperial appointment, when the imperial appointment had not yet been issued; sometimes occurs by itself, suggesting a recommendee awaiting a duty assignment probably of lower status than a Court Gentlemen (*lang*)."

[148] I here translate *fu* as a verb meaning "to write *fu* poetry," as maybe Ban Gu was interpreting it. However, the term *fu* in Western Han times determined not a definite genre but, more likely a long verbal presentation in poetic form. See Kern, 2003b, p. 401.

[149] Called also Pingle guan 平樂觀; it was built by Gaozu (202–195 BC) and located in the Shalin park of the capital.

> played funny wits in the manner of the jesters[150] and delighted in frivolous jokes when composing *fu* and eulogies. This is the reason why he achieved to be an improper favourite,[151] like Dongfang Shuo and attendant Guo, and it is not possible to compare him with Yan Zhu and other important officials.[152]

As is evident from this account, Emperor Wu summoned Mei Gao to court because he was the son of a famous rhapsodist who the Emperor knew and supposedly appreciated (reading this information the Emperor is described as *da xi* 大喜 "greatly delighted"). Maybe the Emperor believed that the son could be as talented as his father in writing poetry. Moreover, if the assumption was not clear enough, it is specified that he entered the court because he had mastered *fu* poetry (*Gao yin fu dian zhong* 皋因賦殿中). It seems then he served at court with success because he was promoted to the rank of "gentleman" (*lang*)[153] and entrusted as an envoy to the Xiongnu. Nevertheless the historian, focusing on the fact that his compositions were mostly of a recreational nature, judged his relationship with the Emperor "improper" (*xiedu* 媟黷), stressing he was not worthy of being compared to important officials who similarly wrote rhapsodies like Yan Zhu.[154] Ban Gu continues in the narration, recording several occasions in which the poet was asked to write a rhapsody; he was always by the side of the Emperor, ready to rhapsodize on whatever the ruler was interested in, and this is the reason why he was such a prolific author. Knechtges remarks about this point that even if in the text it is not specified that Mei Gao chanted the poems, the fact Ban Gu uses *fu* as a verb ("he promptly rhapsodized it" *zhe shi fu zhi* 輒使賦之),[155] and Mei Gao composed several works very quickly,

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[150] Li Qi glossed *hui* 詼as *chao*嘲 "funny;" Yan Shigu, *pai* 俳as *zaxi* 雜戲 (the performance of the jester), and *chang* as *leren* 樂人 (the performer); *HS* 51. 2366, n. 4.

[151] It means that he was improperly familiar with the Emperor, and his behaviour was not respectful as that of the other ministers.

[152] *HS* 51. 2366–2367.

[153] According to Hucker (1985, p. 301, entry n° 3563): "[During Han dynasty] generic term for court attendants from various sources including sons of eminent officials, men specially recommended by regional and local authorities, experienced officials awaiting reappointment, and from 124 BC graduates of the National University (*taixue*); all regular participants in court audiences and used as door guards, ushers, etc., but principally constituted a pool of qualified men available for appointments when vacancies occurred or special needs arose."

[154] Yan (Zhuang) Zhu was also a famous rhapsodist but he also had important political accomplishments. He arrived at court before Sima Xiangru, Dongfang Shuo and the other scholars, and was the one that Emperor Wu most trusted. He was not only a skilful poet but was also able to advise the Emperor on political matters; maybe this is the reason why Ban Gu regarded him in a different way; *HS* 64. 2775.

[155] *HS* 51. 2367.

suggests that some of his *fu* were "extemporaneous oral compositions."[156] This gives another interesting glimpse on which kind of performance was related to the *fu* poetry at that time. The biography concludes by saying:

> 司馬相如善為文而遲，故所作少而善於皋。皋賦辭中自言為賦不如相如，又言為賦乃俳，見視如倡，自悔類倡也。故其賦有詆娸東方朔，又自詆娸。其文敞骳，曲隨其事，皆得其意，頗詼笑，不甚閒靡。
>
> Sima Xiangru was good at refined words but slow, this is why his compositions are few but better than those of [Mei] Gao. [Mei] Gao, in the words of one of his rhapsodies, said that his compositions were not [good] as those of Sima Xiangru, and, besides, he said that his rhapsodies were playful entertainment and he was looked down as a jester (*chang*). He regretted to be like a jester. This is why in his *fu* he deprecates Dongfang Shuo, and also himself. His words were tortuous and indirect, sinuously they were following their subjects, [but once] got their meanings, they were very funny, [but] not very gentle and refined.

Ban Gu, at the end, concludes the passage specifying that he on purpose did not record all Mei's works. The historian here dons the clothes of a literary critic and talks more about Mei Gao's production, judging it. He compares Mei Gao's style with that of Sima Xiangru (179–117 BC),[157] a leading figure among the poets of that time. Compared to him, Mei Gao's compositions appears lacking in refined words due to the fact he lacked time to work on them, having to quickly compose them for the Emperor's impulsive will. It seems the poet was aware of the differences between his poetry and Sima's, and that in one of his now lost rhapsodies lamented about his role at court: he himself defined his works as entertaining compositions (*pai*) and his position as jester–like (*chang*). I would like to stress that Mei Gao, even if engaged in a new type of literature (because this was at that time, a new type of literary production), shared the same traditional values inherited from the Warring States period. That view identified a successful career for a man of learning in terms of his political achievements and in a literary production with deep meanings, that have to express moral value and political advice. He achieved none of these, remaining a low status official and all of his works were consecrated to amuse his Lord.

[156] Knechtges, 2008, 80.

[157] Sima Xiangru was native of Chengdu, in the Shu 蜀 commandery (modern Chengdu, Sichuan); see the accounts about him in: *SJ* 117. 3002-43, *HS* 57. 2533–75.

Consequently, it is with no surprise that he experienced moments of frustration. Even Cao Zhi more than two hundred years later, who greatly enjoyed writing carefree poems, in a letter to a friend lamented about his *fu*–compositions, actually hiding a disappointment for failing to have a successful political career. [158] Despite all of this attitude to the "low" art of *fu* writing, Mei Gao made a living from his skill. He is said to have written jester–like works, but was this not an innovation? As we have previously seen, no jester had up to this time wrote anything, no frivolous songs, nor humorous stories, nothing of the performance types they were supposed to be mastered to entertain the ruler. It can be assumed, according to the "Yiwenzhi," that Mei Gao was, maybe not the first but, definitely one of the most prolific authors that wrote works freed from the classical moralizing tradition; and, maybe, he also enjoyed it; or maybe he lived an ungrateful life, forcing himself to craft poems that he himself did not appreciate at all. Yet I am doubtful about this last picture. It is Ban Gu that portrays Mei's life as a failure and his poetic productions as superficial, when not useless. From Ban's brief description it appears that Mei's poems had a playful nature (*pai* 俳). The listener was guided in a guessing–like–game and derived pleasure from finally catching of the meaning. He then recognizes that Mei's works were funny (*huixiao* 詼笑) and successfully amusing, but this feature was not regarded canonically, as enough for making a composition worthy of being recorded.

1. 2. 2. Dongfang Shuo

Dongfang Shuo shared with Mei Gao the same appellative of being jester-like figures, and his *Hanshu* biography enables us to gain more information about the social atmosphere present at the court of Emperor Wu; it is quite long and contains several anecdotes about his life that will contribute to establish in the tradition his figure as one of the most eccentric personalities of Western Han times.[159] The biography also preserves Dongfang's famous poem "Dakenan" 答客難 in its integrity. Dongfang's

[158] I am referring to "Yang Dezu shu" 楊德祖書 (Letter to Yang Dezu), *WX* 42. 1901-1904.

[159] The *Hanshu*'s "Dongfang Shuo liezhuan" 東方朔列傳 *HS* 65. 2841-2873; "Liezhuan" 列傳 here more than ever means "arranged tradition," as the records of Dongfang life's events do not really follow a precise chronological order, they are mere anecdotes collected together and nothing is told about his life before his arrival at court.

most striking qualities appear to be his capacity to win any argument through witty reasoning and funny remarks, his talent to play with words and his eccentricity. All these features seemed to appeal to Emperor Wu's sense of humour so that he kept Dongfang Shuo at court despite his sometimes outrageous behaviour.[160] It seems that the entertainment he provided was not completely the same kind as Mei Gao's, because his main duty was not to write poetry. His way of speech is also defined as *huixiao* 詼笑 (like Mei Gao's *fu* poetry) glossed as "making someone laugh by cracking jokes;"[161] *kouxie cigei* 口諧辭給 "able to speak humorous and quick words,"[162] and *huizhao* 詼啁 "to mock in a humorous way;" but the expression that defined him and that more will last as a nickname is *guji zhi xiong* 滑稽之雄 "the chief of wits and wags."[163]

First we have to point out that the use of the word *guji* made by the *Hanshu*, clearly borrows a different meaning from the one found in Sima Qian's records. Previously, I stressed that Sima basically understood *guji* as "the capacity to express an indirect remonstrance by an entertaining way of speech and behaviour." His understanding declined the modality of displaying a remonstrance, but what he was interested in was, in the end, the remonstrance itself, its political meaning, not its way of displaying it.[164]

Here it is evident that Ban Gu employs the word with another meaning. His way of understanding it has a closer resemblance to that of another contributor of the *Shiji*, Chu Shaosun. Chu Shaosun added to the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan" several stories. In the part written by him, as we briefly have seen before, it seems that the word *guji* is perceived more as an adjective that identifies amusing stories whose aims were not

[160] Asked to justify himself for having taken food without attending the imperial command, he in contrast argued his defence praising himself, *HS* 65. 2846. He had been dismissed from his official position because, once drunk, he pissed in the imperial court (but after he was restored as a *zhonglang* 中郎), *HS* 65. 2852.

[161] Yan Shigu says: "*huixiao* means *chaoxue*, to speak funny words" 詼笑，謂謔謔，發言可笑也; *HS* 65. 2860, n. 1. This is also the way in which Mei Gao's rhapsodies are defined, *HS* 51. 2367.

[162] The character *gei* 給 stands for *jie* 捷 "quick," *HS* 65. 2860, n. 1.

[163] *HS* 65. 2874, trans., Watson 1974, p. 106. Ban Gu borrowed the definition by Yang Xiong (*FY* 12. 484), but I think that the narrative arranged by Ban Gu in amusing anecdotes became more influential on the subsequent textual tradition.

[164] This is also evident from the words that Sima Qian used to describe the "Guji leizhuan" in the chapter 130, in which every section of the *Shiji* is briefly described: "[Those people] were not dragged down by the customs of their times, nor did they fight for power or profit. Above and below there was no barrier for them which could hold them back. They did no harm to any man since they practised the Way." 不流世俗，不爭埶利，上下無所凝滯，人莫之害，以道之用, *SJ* 130. 3318, trans. with slightly changes Pokora, 1973, p. 54.

the didactic stand but the entertainment of the reader; so he collected very heterogeneous anecdotes that do not function as tales of remonstrance. They are more based on the clever wits and funny remarks of the protagonists. The course of events does not follow a chronological order (as you would expect from a historical text, and a feature that Sima Qian tried to follow all the time), instead they skip from Emperor Wu's time back to Warring States period, and again to Han dynasty. Moreover, Chu Shaosun himself clearly explains his intent saying:

> 臣幸得以經術為郎，而好讀外家傳語。竊不遜讓，復作故事滑稽之語六章，編之於左。可以覽觀揚意，以示後世好事者讀之，以游心駭耳。
>
> This minister, thanks to his knowledge in the Classic and their arts, became an official, and he liked to read the transmitted words of other traditions.[165] He overrated his ability, and, in addition, wrote six *zhang* of *guji* stories, adding them on the left (that is after those written by the Grand Historian). It is possible to read them to stimulate the feelings, to show to later generations that those who had a fondness for curious facts read them, and [also] to make people fancy.[166]

The stories presented by Chu are then written down not for a historical purpose but mainly for entertainment, and *guji* here marks the latter quality. Besides, Chu Shaosun records some anecdotes that have as a protagonist Dongfang Shuo.[167] Evidently, he regards this word appropriate to describe his figure. So we can say that *guji* in Chu and Ban's works is acknowledged as "telling funny words (could them be jokes or stories) for the sake of entertainment." In the biography, to *guji* we find attached another key term, identified by the word *buqiong* 不窮 "inexhaustible."[168]

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[165] The *Shiji suoying* said that this passage refers to stories about Dong Fangshuo and other characters; their stories do not appear in the Classic (*zheng jing* 正經). Gu Ninglin 顧寧林 says that with *waijiashu* 外家書 are meant all the works that are not included in the Six Classics (*liujing*六經) (Takigawa, 1999, p. 5042).

[166] *SJ* 126. 3203. See also Chapter 2. 2.

[167] *SJ* 126. 3205-3208.

[168] The attendant Guo 郭舍人, who shares with Dongfang Shuo and Mei Gao the jester-like position at court, is described through this terminology too. Ban Gu states that he was one of the Emperor's favourite thanks to his "never-ending fund of waggery" (*guji buqiong* 滑稽不窮), *HS* 65. 2844, trans. Watson, 1974, p. 81. The character of attendant Guo is present also in the Chu Shaosun's addition to "Guji liezhuan," and that is also his only occurrence in the entire *Shiji*, *SJ* 126. 3204. It is interesting to evidence that the *Shiji*'s anecdote appears also rearranged in the *Shishuo xinyu* 世说新语 but this time the protagonist is Dongfang Shuo, *SSXY* 10/1. 300-301. This figure is part of the anecdotal lore related to Emperor Wu court's entourage; he appears for example in the *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記, *juan*卷 5: "At the time of Emperor Wu, there was the attendant Guo who was good at playing *touhu*, he used

Before, we have seen that this adjective already declined a quality of a jester's ability to argue, his capacity to talk in a never-ending flux. Ban Gu narrates that Dongfang Shuo, during a contest of riddles, was able to answer back to every absurd request in a way that "no one could pin him down" (*mo neng qiong zhe*莫能窮者); [169] this means that he was always able to find a solution, so his flux of words was impossible to stop, being "inexhaustible." This characteristic is reaffirmed at the end of the chapter. Ban Gu in the appraisal, using the words of Yang Xiong 揚雄 (a scholar who greatly influenced Ban's thoughts), says that "in the humour (*xie* 諧**)** of his replies [Dongfang Shuo] resembles a jester (*you* 優). His inexhaustible (*bu qiong* 不窮) wit resembles wisdom."[170] Hence Dongfang Shuo is compared to a jester due to his language abilities, which grant him an inexhaustible resource of stories, arguments, answers. Moreover, all these have the quality of being amusing and humorous, and are finalized mainly to entertain the listener. Here is the real problem seen before with Mei Gao and now with Dongfang Shuo. The talent of the protagonist is focalized on an activity that, unlike the case of other talented men serving at the imperial court, does not have a political implication, and his role at court is not aimed towards a political intervention in the court affairs. This concept is made explicit when Ban Gu says that Dongfang Shuo is a good debater but debates like a jester (*chang bian* 倡辯) so that he is not able "to sustain an argument" (*buneng chilun* 不能持論).[171] Considering this further, this means that when he engages in a discussion it does not normally end well, with ending well meaning that the opinion is so well presented that the listener, following the reasoning, at the end might normally agree with it and be "persuaded" of the justness of the argumentation. In Ban Gu's view the "persuasion" must be regarding political and moral instructions. What it is reproached to Dongfang Shuo is then the

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arrows made of bamboo, he did not use thorns" 武帝時，郭舍人善投壺，以竹為矢，不用棘也; *XJZJ* 5. 186.

[169] *HS* 65. 2845.

[170] *HS* 65. 2873, trans., with slight changes, by Watson 1974 p. 106. The words of Yang Xiong are taken from his *Fayan*; *FY* 17. 483. In the *Fayan Yishu*'s commentary actually the passage *bu qiong si zhe (zhi)* 不窮似哲 (智) is explained as Dongfang having "inexhaustible talent," due to the fact that he was able to divine with the *achillea*, to guess the objects (a game called *shefu* 射覆), etc.; see *FY* 17. 487. I believe that here it really means a quality of his way of talking. Xie Mingxun, in fact, quoting this same part, says that *bu qiong si zhi* is a characteristic of Dongfang's humorous way to speak ("不窮似智"的詼諧特性); Xie Mingxun, 2001, p. 397.

[171] *HS* 65. 2873. Mei Gao and Dongfang Shuo were already defined in this way in a passage of the *Hanshu* previously quoted, *HS* 64. 2775.

ineffectiveness of his language ability, the fact that through it he is not able to write and create anything that could positively affect the society and the political situation at court. In fact, Ban Gu presents his life as a failure. The biography records several occasions where Dongfang's ready tongue is employed just for having material benefits, such as more money,[172] or more food.[173] Some other times he is really engaged in advising the Emperor on political matters[174] or even remonstrates against the Emperor's decision, yet his advice is rarely followed or taken seriously into consideration. Ban Gu records that when Dongfang's advice fell unheard for the umpteenth time he, out of frustration, wrote the "Dakenan" 答客難, "a disquisition (*lun* 論) in which he set up a guest who raised objections to him" and "he used this as an illustration of how he consoled himself about his low position."[175] Dominique Declercq has shown how Ban Gu's interpretation has been strongly influenced by Yang Xiong, who consciously chose "Dakenan" as a model to his "Jiechao" 解嘲. Yang Xiong read it as a piece of frustration written by a scholar who was not understood by his contemporaries and was not able to fulfil his aspiration to political service.[176] Ban Gu, following Yang's interpretation, chose to ignore completely the different setting arranged by Chu Shaosun several years before. In fact in one of the anecdotes about Dongfang Shuo added by Chu at the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan,"[177] there is the record of the occasion in which Dongfang pronounced his "Response at a guest objection." Here Dongfang's words are presented not as a literary piece but as an oral performance, a literary adaptation of a discussion happened at court. The author is engaged in a debate with several scholars, and he has to defend himself from the criticism of being still a low rank official despite his professed moral superiority. Declercq analyzing Chu's anecdote, hypothesizes that this debate "may have been

[172] *HS* 65. 2843.
[173] *HS* 65. 2846.
[174] For example, he gave his opinion about the choice made by Emperor Wu to condemn to death Zhaoping Jun 昭平君, *HS* 65. 2851. He also rebuked the Emperor about his attitude towards the young lover of his aunt Chen Piao 陳嫖, *HS* 65. 2856-7. Another occasion in which he gives advice is recorded in *HS* 65. 2858.
[175] *HS* 65. 2864, trans. Kern, 2003b, p. 403. Translated also by Watson, 1974, p. 96.
[176] See Declercq, 1998, pp. 20-59. His book contains also a complete translation of Dongfang Shuo's "Dakenan" and Yang Xiong's "Jiechao," see Declerq, 1998, pp. 75-76. For another translation of Yang Xiong's composition see Knechtges, 1976, pp. 97-104. The two poems, even if they are not defined as *fu*, share the same rhapsodic conventions, Kentchges, 1976, p. 103. See also how Aat Vervoon discusses this passage, Vervoon, 1990, pp. 203-212.
[177] *SJ* 126. 3206.

staged for the Emperor's entertainment or even at Emperor's instigation"[178] and believes that Chu's presentation of the "response," due to its "impromptu and agonistic character," "captures the text's spirit better than Ban Gu's."[179] Even if Chu's record was available to him, Ban Gu follows Yang's view and describes Dongfang's text as a lament of the poet for his insignificant position at court. The reason is that he shared with Yang Xiong the same pragmatic view about literature, and in particular a critical view about *fu* poetry and other entertaining compositions lacking didactic and political purpose.

As we already recorded about Mei Gao, the *Hanshu* presents the literary compositions that have as their aim primarily the entertainment, as not worthy of being engaged in, and describes those scholars who were following this literary trend as lacking of achievements. This judgment is reaffirmed in other parts of the *History.* In particular, in the biography dedicated to Yang Xiong, great space is given to the poet's opinion about *fu* poetry. Through Yang's opinions,[180] it is stressed that the principal purpose of the rhapsody is to criticize by indirection (*feng*) and that the poets at the court of the Emperor Wu failed to do it because their refined and ornate language diverted the reader from the poems' moral meaning. Yang Xiong, in the biography, disserts in particular about Sima Xiangru, once his model. He criticizes him because, even if he presented the "Daren fu" 大人賦 (Great man rhapsody) in order to admonish his lord, the result was that the Emperor "had the intention of airily floating on the clouds."[181] From this fact, Yang Xiong resolved in discharging the *fu* as a tool for moral instruction and regarded the rhapsodists as "followers of Chunyu Kun and Jester Meng."[182] We have to note two things here: first, Yang Xiong also acknowledges "guji" word through the understanding already found in Chu Shaosun. The proof is that he cites Chunyu Kun and Jester Meng, two of the protagonists of the "Guji liezhuan," as a depreciative term of comparison; but these two characters, in Sima Qian's intention, actually performed *fu*[183] that were real *feng* (remonstrance). Moreover, their remonstrances were effective, because every time

[178] Declercq, 1998, p. 24.
[179] Declercq, 1998, p. 20.
[180] The biography of Yang Xiong is a valuable historical source as it is probably based on Yang's autobiography, see Knechtges, 1976, p. 4.
[181] *SJ* 117. 3063.
[182] *HS* 87. 3575, the translation of the passage is in Knechtges, 1976, p. 4.
[183] We already recorded that the oral performance provided by these characters was in *fu*-like rhymed form; See Hu Shiying, 1980, p. 9; Wang Yunxi, 2002, pp. 289-90.

they succeeded in changing their ruler's wrong behaviour. Originally, then, they were not a good match with Sima Xiangru, their speeches were not entertaining performances, were effective advices. Yang Xiong, thus, reads "guji" only in Chu's way, as an adjective which identifies "humorous" speeches and compositions. Therefore, he understands these two characters as only mere professional entertainers. Secondly, we find here the former ideological evidence on which the *Hanshu*'s based its view of pure *fu* writers as "jester-like" figures.

Yang Xiong's influence appears again at the end of the "Yiwenzhi"'s section about *fu* and *shi* poems. Here, the comment states that the poets of the past, like Xun Qing 荀卿 (Xunzi 荀子, 313–238 BC) and Qu Yuan屈原 (c. 340–278 BC), wrote *fu* to admonish by indirection (*feng*). Those of later times (starting from Song Yu 宋玉 to Western Han poets), instead, with their compositions based on words vastly over-elaborated, "drowned the meaning of indirect persuasion (*feng*) and moral illustration (*yu*)," [184] contributing to a degeneration of the genre. Thus, to reinforce this criticism, it is quoted Yang's regret for having written *fu* in his youth.[185] In the quoted passage, he dismissed the genre saying: "The *fu* of the *Odes* poets, through their beauty, offer standards [of moral behaviour], the *fu* of the epideictic poets are beautiful and lead to excess" 詩人之賦麗以則，辭人之賦麗以淫.[186] Here there is a clear comparison between the poems of the past related to the *Shijing* tradition, which are worthy standard of morality, with the contemporaneous literary compositions, which in contrast, based on an excessively affected language, lead inevitably to an improper behaviour. Martin Kern had already brilliantly shown how this view belongs to a *ru* "classicist" approach to literary production. This approach (which starts from the *Maoshi* interpretation of the Odes)[187] is canonized in Liu Xin's bibliographical chapter,[188] and "is forged explicitly against the generous splendour of Emperor Wu

[184] 競為侈儷閎衍之詞，沒其風諭之義, *HS* 30. 1756.
[185] At the beginning of *Fayan*'s "Wuzi" (Exemplary Sayings) chapter, he regards the *fu* written in his youth as "calligraphic exercises of a child in the worm and seal script" 童子雕蟲篆刻, *FY* 3. 45. This calligraphic scripts were part of the basic education of a child. Yang Xiong compares the *fu* to calligraphy, which was considered a minor art (*xiaozhi* 小技); in this way he affirms that this kind of poetry is also a *xiaozhi* and thus it can not be employed to express high moral values (*da dao* 大道), see *FY* 3. 46.
[186] *HS* 30. 1756. The words of Yang Xiong are quoted from *FY* 3. 49. Martin Kern has a point in affirming that *yin* here does not mean only "excessively elaborated literary style" (as it is explained in the commentary, *FY* 3. 50) but it refers also to the reader's behaviour which is affected by this writings; Kern, 2003b, p. 391, n. 20.
[187] The *Maoshi* commentary will be established as canonical under Emperor Ping 平 (r. 1 BC–6 AD).
[188] Kern, 2003b, p. 410, 416-17, 431-36.

reign […], portrayed as an era of moral and cultural degeneration."[189] This type of scholars, still, recognizes in the epideictic rhapsodies (or *Dafu*, great *fu*, the type mastered by Sima Xiangru), an undeniable beauty. Sima Xiangru at least was recognized as the crafter of refined works of poetry.[190] Those more simple and more easily written compositions (*xiao fu*), as Mei Gao's seemed to be, instead, are not taken in equal consideration so that they never appear even as a term of discussion. Therefore, even if the epideictic rhapsody is regarded as a type of entertainment, the poets that are considered as jester-like figures are only Mei Gao and Dongfang Shuo.[191] The "humorous" nature of their performances (the writings for the first, and the playful use of language for the second) is not regarded as a quality that deserves serious consideration.

About Dongfang Shuo's figure, as is presented by the *Hanshu*'s biography, we already noted that Emperor Wu was delighted primarily by Dongfang's quick and witty responses, and by his eccentric language exploits. He appreciated his wit and language skills even when they exceeded the traditional court etiquette. For example, when Dongfang Shuo submitted to the throne a memorial asking to be selected as an official, instead of writing a display of scholarship and political advice he just boldly glorified himself, but Emperor Wu, surprised by his oddness, still gave him a place at court.[192] Another example was when Dongfang took home a gift of meat without waiting for the official approval. When asked by the Emperor to excuse himself, he instead answered in a way that was not an apology at all! Nevertheless, the Emperor said "I told you to confess your faults and here you are praising yourself!"[193] and gave him more meat. It is evident that Emperor Wu appreciated Donfang Shuo's language mastery, the fact that he was never left down in an argument even when he conducted the reasoning only to his own personal benefit. The Emperor was amused by his display of argumentations and was used to asking him questions like: "Looking at yourself, how do you think you compare [with the other scholars at the court]?" 先生自視，何與比哉,[194] clearly seeking Dongfang Shuo's self appraisal, or: "Look

[189] Kern, 2003b, p. 431.
[190] As we have seen, Yang Xiong thought that Sima Xiangru did want to admonish the Sovereign (even if he failed); Yang Xiong sees in Sima's epideictic rhapsodies a moralizing tension.
[191] Wang Huanran, 2003, p. 18.
[192] *HS* 65. 2841- 2842.
[193] *HS* 65. 2846, trans. Watson, 1974, p. 83.
[194] *HS* 65. 2863, trans. Watson, 1974, p. 96.

at me sir — what kind of ruler am I?" 先生視朕何如主也.[195] In reality he was waiting to hear a well arranged reasoning not a real judgment. It seems to me that with Emperor Wu already the sprouts of a cultural changing of the society (with important implications for literature) that would emerge more evident in later times were appearing. In the examples cited above it is evident that the Emperor appreciated the "pure" linguistic talent and that his judgment was not morally based. It is also evident from the biography of Mei Gao that it did happen in this period that a man obtained an official position only due to his literary skills,[196] but this was not an established system. It was the Emperor that bestowed it, according to his personal will and fancy. It was an unusual episode, but still it was something innovative in the traditional panorama of official recruitment. Emperor Wu was also the one who established the Imperial Academy (Taixue 太學, 124 BC), i.e. the study of the Five Classics (*Wujing*), as a path to have access to an official career, but the cultural atmosphere at court was not unidirectional. The scholars that referred to the traditional learning were engaged in a continuous debate with another group within the educated elite who were representative of its non–canonical lineage, and

[195] *HS* 65. 2860, trans Watson, 1974, p. 95.

[196] Long time ago David Knechtges already noted this, pointing out that Sima Xiangru had obtained the title of a gentlaman (*lang*) after having presented a rhapsody on the imperial hunt (賦奏，天子以為郎, *HS* 57. 2575), and Wang Bao 王褒 delighted Empero Xuan 宣 with poems on hunts and was selected as Grand Remonstrant (*Jiandafu* 諫大夫); Knechtges, 1976, p. 121, n. 13. It also seems that Yang Xiong himself was promoted thanks to his mastery of *fu* poetry: "Wang Yin, who held the title of *Da Sima Juji Jinagjun*, was surprised by Xiong's refined literary compositions, he summoned him and recommended him for awaiting an appointment. After a year, Yang submitted the "Yuliefu" and was appointed as a gentleman (*lang).*" 大司馬車騎將軍王音奇其文雅，召以為門下史，薦雄待詔，歲余，奏《羽獵賦》，除為郎; *HS* 87. 3583. About this topic Martin Kern affirms that : "There is no indication that any *fu* writer of the Western Han gained official recognition as a political advisor by virtue of his literary abilities. Moreover, in no case do we see a *fu* author advancing to high office because of his literary skills in conveying political advice and indirect admonition.[...] While literary performance and verbal eloquence might have contributed to one's popularity at court, they were not considered sufficient qualifications for imperial office;" Kern, 2003b, pp. 405-6. He cites Wan Guangzhi's opinion presented in his *Hanfu tonglun* 漢賦通論, as a proof, but Wan denies the existence in Western Han dynasty of a "system" (*zhidu* 制度) of recruitment of officials based on *fu* poetry ("there are no proofs in the historical texts to state that during Han dynasty there was a system based on the submission of *fu* and that was relying only on this [to obtain an office]" 說漢代有考賦獻賦的制度，卻于史無征; Wan Guangzhi, 1989, p. 127). If it is of a system that we are talking about I agree with both, because, as I said in the primary text, the promotion through the submission of *fu*-poetry was not systematized. The promotion was granted according to emperor's will, so it was accidental, as the cited examples shown. Instead, if we talk also about Later Han times, I might disagree. Wan seems not to take in great consideration the institution of Hongdu Gate Academy, and to agree completely with the judgment given by Cai Yong about this innovation (see Wan Guangzhi, 1989, pp. 134-137). This could be an example of how today scholarship is still influenced by the conservative literary trend that arouse at the end of Western Han times. See also below.

Dongfang Shuo was that kind of figure.[197] The stories about his eccentric personality and deeds were already very famous among his contemporaries so that Liu Xiang and Ban Gu, once in charge of compiling official documents regarding Han times, could not avoid to mention his figure.[198] Still, these documents are arranged according to their particular point of view that so much succeed in establishing its position as the trustful one in the survey of literary history.

To resume, a "modernist court culture,"[199] of which Mei Gao and Dongfang Shuo are paradigmatic figures emerged during the reign of Emperor Wu, but was later rejected by conservative criticism. This negative judgment which saw in the didactic stand the primary aim of literary production was then canonized by the compilation of the first bibliographical chapter of Liu Xin and Liu Xiang and reaffirmed by Ban Gu's history. Even if this was not the only voice in the cultural panorama,[200] it succeeded to become canonical so that it remains weightier in the literary criticism of later times. This paradigm appears unchanged, for example, also in Liu Xie 劉勰 's (fifth century) *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, the first systematic work of literary criticism in China.[201] Even if Liu Xie is the first to identify a category for those literary works that owned "humorous features," regarding the authors taken in exam, he says:

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[197] In one of the anecdotes written by Chu Shaosun it is recorded that a strange creature appeared in the palace, but not one of Emperor Wu's ministers was able, after consulting the Classics, to determine which kind of creature it was, so the Emperor asked to Dongfang Shuo; *SJ* 126. 3207. The role of Dongfang in this story is similar to that of the *fangshi* described in *Shiji*'s "Feng shan shu" chapter.

[198] Ban Gu closes the biography saying: "Shuo's humorous speeches, [his]divinations and guesses, the anecdotes that regarded him, shallow and inconsequential as they are, were passed around among the common people, and there was no children or cowherds who failed to be dazzled by them. In later times, men who fancy such stories have invented all sorts of odd sayings and outlandish tales and attached Shuo's name to them. That is the reason I have written of him in such detail," 朔之詼諧，逢占射覆，其事浮淺，行於眾庶，童兒牧豎莫不眩耀。而後世好事者因取奇言怪語附著之朔，故詳錄焉; *HS* 65. 2873, trans. with some changes, Watson, 1974, p. 106. The popularity of the subject is evident from this passage. The eccentric personality of Dongfang Shuo appealed the common people and in general those who "like stories" (*haoshizhe*).

[199] Kern, 2010, p. 93.

[200] Later Other traditions were to appropriate Dongfang Shuo's character; see Campany, 1996, pp. 134-146, and pp. 273-364. He also became a figure in the popular religion identified with "taoist" unconventionality and even longevity.

[201] Liu's view on literary creation is no less radically different from that of Han and pre-Han critics. He stressed the political and didactic messages hidden behind "humourous" compositions, as I understand that he conceived especially poetry as a tool to "eulogize good and correct evil deeds." However, Zongqi Cai (2001, p. 54) has pointed out that Liu Xie regards literature also as embodying "the Tao within its 'wen' or beautiful configurations, and thereby sets forth the warp and woof of the cosmos, perfects and unifies the lasting laws," and "on the stratum of ethical-socio-political processes, we notice his shift of attention from practical didactic concerns of the Great Preface to a 'metaphysical' task of embodying the ideal moral and social order in a bellestristic work." Ban Gu understanding of literature, instead, was not metaphysical but more near to that of the Great Preface,

于是東方、枚皋，餔糟啜醨，無所匡正，而詆嫚媟弄，故其自稱為賦，乃亦俳也，見視如倡，亦有悔矣。

Thus we have Dongfang Shuo and Mei Gao, who "feed on the dregs of the wine,"[202] They did nothing to correct [the government], instead they slandered and indulged in frivolous and improper acts. This is why [Mei Gao] considered his *fu* as mere jester–like entertainment, and he regretted being looked upon as a jester".[203]

As we can see, Liu Xie proposes again exactly the same judgment as Ban Gu and Yang Xiong analyzed in the previous pages, discharging Mei Gao and Dongfang Shuo with few lines.

Han emperors, after Emperor Wu, continued to occasionally appoint officials who were primarily skilled in poetic composition. However, traditional scholars did not stop to reproach and condemn this practice. Exemplary is the case of Emperor Xuan 宣 (r. 73–48 BC) who had to defend his choice of appointing Wang Bao 王褒 and Zhang Ziqiao 張子僑 basically to enjoy their *fu* on hunts and other imperial activities.[204] The appointment for these kinds of officials was granted by the emperor according to his personal taste, as there was not an official recruitment system; but this panorama was set to change during Later Han times.

[202] It means that they had a tendency to sink to the level of the common people, drift with the current; this expression comes from the "Yufu" 漁夫 poem of the *Chuci* 楚辭; *WXDL* 15. 196.

[203] This passage appears in the *Wenxin diaolong*'s chapter "Xie yin" 諧隱 (humour and enigma); *WXDL* 15. 195, based on Shih, 1983, p. 157.

[204] Emperor Xuan said in his defense: "The greatest of the *fu* pieces have the same moral principles as the ancient *Songs*, while the least of them are rhetorically ornate and designed to delight. They are like silk and crepe in a seamstress' work or the odes of Zheng and Wei music. According to the current mores, everyone considers these as things that please the ears and eyes. *Fu*, by comparison, still contain moral instruction about humaneness and propriety, and much information about birds, animals, plants, and trees. That is far better than the antics of entertainers and jesters or games such as *bo* and *yi*." 辭賦，大者與古詩同義，小者辯麗可喜。辟如女工有綺縠，音樂有鄭、衛，今世俗猶皆以此虞說耳目，辭武比之，尚有仁義風諭，鳥獸草木多聞之觀，賢於倡優博弈遠矣; *HS* 64. 2829, trans. Knechtges, 2010, p. 15. His defence is an echo of the *Lunyu:* "The Master said, 'Spending the entire day filling himself with food, never once exercising his mind—someone like this is a hard case indeed! Do we not have the games Bo and Yi? Even playing these games would be better than doing nothing.;" *LY* 17/22. 189, trans. Slingerland, 2003, p. 210. He appointed then Wang Bao as Grand Master of Remonstrant (*jian dafu* 諫大夫).

1. 3. Eastern Han times, the institution of Hongdu Gate Academy

In 178 A.D., under the reign of Emperor Ling 靈 (r. 168–189) an unprecedented event took place in the cultural panorama. A new school, somehow in opposition with the Taixue 太学, the Imperial Academy, was created.[205] It was called Hongdu Gate Academy (*Hongdu men xue* 鴻都門學) because it was located inside the Hongdu Gate of one of the compounds of the imperial palace.[206] The new institution ratified a breaking point with the traditional recruitment system of appointing officials. Until that date, the selection procedure of the candidates eligible for appointments was made according to the recommendation system based on the Confucian categories such as *xiaolian* 孝廉 (filial and incorrupt), *xiucai* 秀才 (flourishing talents), *xianliang* 賢良 (worthy and outstanding), and *fangzheng* 方正 (square and upright).[207] The students who had access to the new academy were instead guaranteed an official position in the bureaucracy on the basis of their ability to compose official documents,[208] write *fu* poetry and their excellence in calligraphy.[209] For the first time, arts traditionally considered as *minor* (*xiao dao* 小道) became the selective criteria for appointment. Despite the large number of students that the new academy attracted, few accounts remain of the activities of the institution itself or of its students' deeds, and again, as in the cases of Dongfang Shuo and Mei Gao, the accounts come from the critical voices of those traditional scholars who were against the establishing of the new institution. Most of the information comes from the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, written by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), which embedded in the historical narration the memorials against the academy.

There has been a variety of speculation regarding the factors leading the creation of the Hongdu Gate institution, as the historical records do not clearly

[205] *HHS* 8. 340.
[206] It is not possible to identify the exact location of the Academy because the sources are discordant: the Song dynasty *Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記 recorded it at the gate of the northern palace, the Qing dynasty *Dushi fangyujiyao* 讀史方輿紀要 instead, at the southern palace; see Zeng Weihua, 2010, p. 43; Knechtges, 2010, p. 35, n. 3.
[207] See Bielenstein, 1980, pp. 136-141, and Qian Nanxiu, 2001, pp. 26-29.
[208] *Chidu* 尺牘; on a possible different interpretation of this term see Knechtges, 2010, p. 13.
[209] As recorded by Li Xian 李賢 in the commentary of the *HHS* 8. 341.

explain it. In order to understand the situation as clearly as possible, some passages of the few accounts concerning the topic will be analysed. One account states:

> 初，帝好學，自造皇羲篇五十章，因引諸生能為文賦者。本頗以經學相招，後諸為尺牘及工書鳥篆者，皆加引召，遂至數十人。侍中祭酒樂松、賈護，多引無行趣埶之徒，並待制鴻都門下，憙陳方俗閭里小事，帝甚悅之，待以不次之位。
>
> Earlier, the emperor had been fond of learning, and composed on his own the *Huangxi pian* in fifty sections, and thus he recruited students who were able to compose *wenfu*. Originally, he had been inclined to summon men based on their classical learning, but later those who were recruited were all those who could compose court documents and were skilled at writing bird and seal script. The number eventually reached several tens.[210] The assistants to the palace attendants, Yue Song and Jia Hu, mostly recommended unscrupulous and opportunistic types, who all awaited imperial command at the Hongdu Gate. They enjoyed expounding on local customs and minor village affairs. The emperor enjoyed this very much, and he appointed them to positions without following the proper sequence of promotions.[211]

According to the explanation given by Zhao Guohua, [212] Emperor Ling, in order to finish composing his work on the script, the *Huangxi pian* (or *Xihuang*; *xi* refers to Fuxi 伏羲 to whom traditionally is ascribed the invention of the eight trigrams, traditionally believed to be the origins of Chinese writing system), summoned several scholars from the Imperial Academy (*zhusheng* 諸生) skilled in *fu* poetry (*wenfu* 文賦). Only after following the advices of two trusted ministers, he began to appoint a different kind of men. The text says that these men were waiting for the imperial command at the Hongdu Gate, which implies that they were still not officially appointed. The fact that the Emperor greatly liked their works could be the premise to the establishing of the new institution.[213] Hence the activity at the Hongdu Gate might well have begun before the official date of its foundation, in particular because in 177, Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–192 AD), one of the most famous

[210] According to Zeng Weihua, 2010, p. 43 there were several tens only at the beginning, but when the academy was properly established, the students became more and more.
[211] *HHS* 60. 1991-1992, trans. Knechtges, 2010, p. 11.
[212] Zhao Guohua, 2000, p. 118; see also Knechtges, 2010, p.12.
[213] Zhao Guohua, 2000, p. 119.

officials and scholars of the time, had already expressed his disdain and contrariety towards these kinds of intellectuals in a memorial to the throne.[214] In the fifth part of the document he stated:

> 孝武之世，郡舉孝廉，又有賢良、文學之選，於是名臣輩出，文武並興。漢之得人，數路而已。夫書畫辭賦，才之小者，匡國理政，未有其能。陛下即位之初，先涉經術，聽政餘日，觀省篇章，聊以游意，當代博弈，非以教化取士之本。而諸生競利，作者鼎沸。其高者頗引經訓風喻之言；下則連偶俗語，有類俳優。
>
> In the time of Emperor Wu, the commanderies presented "filial and incorrupt" candidates, and there were also selections of the "worthy and outstanding" and those versed in "literature and scholarship." In this way, celebrated ministers appeared in large numbers, and the state flourished in both the civil and the military arts. So the Han has a number of different ways of obtaining men [to serve]. Calligraphy and painting, essays and rhapsodies, these are the skills of petty men, and they are of no use in correcting the state and carrying on the administration. When your majesty first came to the throne, you primarily were involved in the classics and in their arts. It was only in spare time from the government occupation that you would concern yourself with other writings, and then they were no more than a past–time, an alternative to the *bo* and *yi* game.[215] They can never serve as the basis for education and selection to official position. Now, however, we have all these students contending together for their own advantage, and writers [of *fu*] are in ferment. Those who are at the highest level, use in their words allusions to the classics. Those who are at the lowest level, string together vulgar sayings in the manner of jesters.[216]

Cai Yong begins his critique recalling that the Han dynasty already has a successful method to recruit officials, and this method was the selection according to Confucian moral value and knowledge of the Classics that was established during Emperor Wu's reign. So we have already arrived at the focal point of the discussion; the arts and skills now considered to obtain an official post are in reality "of no use in correcting the state." He goes on saying that previously Emperor Ling cherished the

[214] *HHS* 60. 1993-1998.
[215] An echo to *LY* 17/22. 189.
[216] *HHS* 60. 1996. See also the translation in De Crespigny, 2003, on which I based mine.

classical learning, probably referring to the fact that in 172 the Emperor, under Cai Yong's suggestion, had charged the *ru* scholars to engrave a new edition of the five Confucian classics and to place it "outside the door of the Imperial Academy".[217] At the end of the passage he provides some more information about the textual production created by members of the Hongdu Gate Academy. He does recognize that some of them were quoting the classics, but more importantly, he describes those he considers students of "the lowest level" as "stringing together vulgar sayings in the manner of jesters." The definition "stringing together vulgar sayings" (*lianou suyu* 連偶俗語), reminds the explanation given by Ru Chun 如淳 (fl. 189–265 AD), of the term *bai* 稗 at the end of the "xiaoshuo" 小說 entry in the Bibliographical chapter of the *Hanshu*.[218] Ru Chun states that at his time *bai* means *ouyu* 偶語 "collecting together gossip." He explains in this way the name of the officials, the *baiguan* 稗官 who, according to the *Hanshu* were in charge of collecting "the composition of those who prattle and talk in the streets and byways, and tell in the lane what they have heard on the road."[219] Hence it can be deduced that the literary production of these new students is seen by traditional scholars in a similar way as *xiaoshuo* texts were seen. The allusion is marked again at the end of the fifth part of the memorial where he states: "Even if there are arts that require small ability and a low standard of excellence, and there something worth to be considered [in them], yet Confucius considered it inappropriate for a *junzi* to indulge in them," 若乃小能小善，雖有可觀，孔子以為致遠則泥,[220] clearly re–proposing the same judgment given to the *xiaoshuo* texts in the *Hanshu*.[221]In the previous passage, the Hongdu Gate's scholars were already defined as liking the "local customs and minor village affairs" (*fangsu lüli xiaoshi* 方俗閭里小事).[222] So there was a "popular" component in their works, and I would stress that the "popular" feature was going along with the entertaining one. This is the reason why it appears again, the definition of works that are "jesters–like" (*you lei paiyou* 有類俳優). Cai Yong judges the works of these new intellectuals in the same way in which were judged the compositions of Mei Gao and the jests of Dongfang Shuo; and the word *paiyou* again

[217] *HHS* 8. 336.
[218] *HS* 30. 1745. See Fu Junlian, 2005, p. 42.
[219] *HS* 30. 1745.
[220] *HHS* 60. 1997. An echo of *LY* 19/4. 200.
[221] *HS* 30. 1745. On this passage see also Holzman, 2003, pp. 77-78.
[222] *HHS* 60. 1992.

defines those works that do not have an educative and political aim but only an amusing one. However, Cai Yong in his memorial is not really giving a negative judgment about this kind of literature; he actually was involved in it. He was versed in different kinds of genres, from stele inscription to poetry, leaving a corpus of 104 works,[223] among them several *fu* and some of which can be considered "vulgar rhapsody" as those of the members of Hongdu Gate Academy.[224] Emblematic is his "Duanren fu" 短人賦 (Rhapsody on dwarfs),[225] a humorous composition in which he compares the dwarfs with small animals and objects.[226] Hence it can be assumed that these kinds of writings were actually part of the literary trend that was in fashion at Han court, and in which were engaged different kinds of intellectuals. What Cai Yong is criticizing in his memorial is then not this kind of literature in itself, but the criterion of choosing officials focusing on artistic skills rather than on morality. He is basically giving a political judgment, not a literary one. Because these works were useless for the "government of the State" (*kuang guo li zheng, wei you qi neng* 匡國理政，未有其能) they could not be an adequate criteria to appoint officials.[227]

The second critique to the new institution came from Yang Ci 楊賜 (d. 185 AD), a *ru* scholar specialising in the *Shangshu* 尚書: [228]

> 今妾媵嬖人閹尹之徒，共專國朝，欺罔日月。又鴻都門下，招會鯧小，造作賦說，以蟲篆小技見寵於時。
>
> At the present time the likes of concubines, favourites, and eunuchs all join to monopolize the court and deceive your imperial brilliance. Furthermore, at the Hongdu Gate, they recruit and assemble multitudes of petty men who compose *fu*

[223] *HHS* 60. 2007.
[224] Chinese scholarship now defines this kind of *fu* with "popular taste," which talks about trivial matters and an object in a humorous way, as *sufu* 俗賦 "vulgar rhapsody;" this label is in contrast to the longer and refined works of epideictic writers such as Sima Xiangru. This distinction began to appear at the beginning of twentieth century with the archaeological discovering at the Donghuang's site of a previously unseen kind of *fu* poetry. Subsequently, this label has been accepted and has also been applied also to others *fu* that were seen as similar to those of Donghuang. Several *fu* of Cai Yong are so classified, and it is presumed that Mei Gao was writing the same kind of compositions. For an overview of the "sufu" topic see Fu Junlian伏俊璉, 2008, *Sufu Yanjiu* 俗賦研究, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju.
[225] *QHHW* 69. 853-854. English translation in Asselin 2010, pp. 359-366.
[226] Liu Chujing, 2010, pp. 171-8; Knechtges, 2010, pp. 28-29.
[227] Wang Yongping 1999, p. 12.
[228] *HHS* 54. 1776.

shuo, and who are favoured in their time for such minor arts as writing in worm script.[229]

This record introduces another issue, of why the Hongdu Gate Academy was created and what kinds of men came from it. The scholars do not have a unique opinion about these questions. From the first passage quoted it seemed that Emperor Ling established the Academy following his private interest in embelished and entertaining writings,[230] but here Yang Ci links a connection between the eunuchs' faction and the members of the institution. Western scholars in the past saw in the Hongdu Gate a place found by eunuchs to educate the eunuchs,[231] but there are no definite proofs for this statement.[232] Wang Yongping and other Chinese scholars are recently more inclined to assert that the eunuchs promote only the establishing of the Academy. They had control of the affairs internal to the imperial palace but they lacked the ability to operate in the status apparatus, so they used the Hongdu Gate Academy to recruit officials to be positioned at high levels, to contrast in this way the traditional scholars' faction; but the students were not eunuchs.[233] Zhao Guohua more cautiously argues that even if the eunuchs put their feet in the Hongdu Gate School after its establishment, the institution was not necessarily founded to promote their affiliates.[234] Besides the problem of its establishment, what it is sure is that the new institution was seen in a favourable way by the eunuchs' faction. Yang Ci then espouses the arts mastered by the students: the calligraphic art of [bird–]worm seal script (*chong zhuan* 蟲篆), [235] and *fu shuo* 賦說. About this last term Knechtges recognizes that it is unusual, suggesting it could refer to "a type of *fu* that involved display of wit, jokes, and amusing stories," such as those of Mei Gao.[236] Wang Yongping instead understands it as *fu* poetry and *xiaoshuo.*[237] It was

[229] *HHS* 54. 1780. Knechtges, 2010, p. 17.
[230] Chen Jun inclined for this reason; Chen Jun, 2007, p. 39.
[231] See the brief presentation of the western sinologists' opinions in Knechtges, 2010, p. 21.
[232] See Knechtges, 2010, pp. 22-23.
[233] Wang Yongping, 1999, p. 16. See Zeng Weihua, 2010, p. 43, n. 1.
[234] Zhao Guohua, 2000, p. 119.
[235] The term *niao-chong shu* 鳥蟲書 since Spring and Autumn period refers to an ornamental style for inscriptions, prevalent on banners, that used characters shaped in small wavy lines of bird and worm form (about this topic see Cao Jinyan 曹錦炎, 1999, *Niao Chong shu tongkao* 鳥蟲書通考, Shanghai, Shanghai shuhua) but in Later Han it identifies dignified and elegant handwritten seal script that has no association with the bird like inscription of previous time; see Qi Gong, 2004, pp. 36 -7. This statement has been confirmed by the new discovering in 2004 of Later Han period bamboo slips found in Changsha, Hunan province. See references in Chen Jun, 2007, p. 41, and n. 3, p. 41.
[236] Knechtges, 2010, p. 19.

previously mentioned that *fu* poetry and *xiaoshuo* are sometimes described in the same way, and their definitions overlap. Moreover, *xiaoshuo* in Han times does not indicate a genre; so it could be possible that the scholars used it as a very general term, referring to everything that contains a narration, in prose or in poetry, with no serious purpose.

The last and more harsh critique presented comes from Yang Qiu 陽球 (d. 179 AD), who at the time was serving as a Prefect of the Masters of Writing (*Shangshu ling* 尚書令). He said:

> 案松、覽等皆出於微蔑，斗筲小人，依憑世戚，附托權豪，俛眉承睫，徼進明時。或獻賦一篇，或鳥篆盈簡，而位升郎中，形圖丹青。
>
> [Yue] Song, [Jiang] Lan, and the others all come from slight and minor backgrounds, and they are petty men of tiny capacity.[238] Relying on families with distinguished pedigrees, they attach themselves to powerful magnates, and lowering their eyebrows to curry favour, they seek position and advancement. Some of them present a *fu*, while others fill bamboo strips with bird script writing, and they are elevated to the position of palace gentlemen and have their portraits painted.[239]

Considering the order given by Emperor Ling to affix to the walls of the new Hongdu academy thirty–two portraits of the school's members as an encouragement for the students, he took the chance to remonstrate against the founding of the Hongdu Gate Academy. His main criticism goes to the social background of these new students who came from families of humble origin. Regarding this point, Zhao Guohua states that they came from poor families without power so that they flattered the Emperor and went along with the eunuchs to gain favour.[240] Poor families of course does not mean that they were common people. Their predilection for "popular" themes might confuse someone.[241] They probably were landlords or sons of landlords without status. They did not have an illustrious family background but through the Hongdu Gate Academy they acquired the same official positions as the traditional *shi*, who felt humiliated by this.[242] Another important point must be

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[237] Wang Yongping 1999, p. 14.
[238] *LY* 13/20. 140.
[239] *HHS* 77. 2499.
[240] Zhao Guohua, 2000, p. 119; Wang Yongping, 1999, p. 14.
[241] Wang Huanren seems to think that they were common people; Wang Huanren, 2003, p. 19.
[242] Zeng Weihua, 2010, p. 44.

stressed. The Hongdu Gate Academy was not a real school like the Taixue, lacking educational activities and learning programmes. Its members were already trained in the arts by which they were chosen.[243] The new institution created bureaucrats. Then, despite the fact that Hongdu Gate Academy did not create intellectuals but rather officials, we have to recognize that Emperor Ling was the first to choose to appoint men according to their literary talents and skills (*caiyi* 才藝). In spite of the contrariety of the traditional scholars, the "vulgar and popular taste," the kind of writings with jester–like features found for the first time their legitimation in the creation of the new Academy. Now their *fu*–compositions became one of the standard criterions for selection, [244] and they acquired an independent value. In modern times several scholars agree in seeing in Emperor Ling the unconscious promoter of the transformation of literary panorama that will appear evident in the Wei period,[245] and in the foundation of Hongdu Gate Academy the sprout for the birth of "self aware literature,"[246] which would flourish in the Wei Jin times. Even if the Academy only lasted for a very short period of time[247] its emancipation from the *jingxue* 經學 produced an important impact on the literary scene and its influence would continue in the following period. Nevertheless, the "Wenyuan zhuan" 文苑傳 chapter of the *Houhan shu* does not record the deeds of the Hongdu Gate's scholars, and their traces are rarely found in other texts.[248] Chen Jun, regarding this point, hypothesises that either they did not have literary achievements, or Fan Ye purposefully decided to not mention them, considering them not worthy of it. He favours the first hypothesis,[249] but it is highly probable that it is involved the same critical process that recorded neither Mei Gao's scripts nor other compositions devoted to entertainment or that lacked moral claims. A passage of *Wenxin diaolong*, again, is enlightening for this supposition; as shown earlier, Liu Xie has a conservative approach towards literature without didactic stands. Regarding this period he records:

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[243] Zhao Guohua, 2000, p. 123; Zeng Weihua, 2010, p. 44.
[244] *Yi* (arts) in previous time was always seen as an instrument for "exhort virtue and punish vice" and to propagate feudal and moral principles, now it is was a step forward in freeing literature from the judgment of moral principles.
[245] Wang Yongping, 1999, p. 16.
[246] Wang Yongping, 1999, p. 14; Zhao Guohua, 2000, p. 123; Zheng Weihua, 2010, p. 46.
[247] Zhao Guohua says 10 years; Zhao Guohua, 2000, p. 123. Zeng Weihua says that probably in 184 it was already stopped; Zeng Weihua, 2010, p. 44.
[248] Zeng Weihua states that it is possible to find the traces of only seven members; see Zeng Weihua 2010, p. 45.
[249] Chen Jun, 2007, p. 43.

> 降及靈帝，時好辭製，造羲皇之書，開鴻都之賦，而樂松之徒，招集淺陋，故楊賜號為驩兜，蔡邕比之俳優，其餘風遺文，蓋篾如也。
>
> Next we come to Emperor Ling who had an inveterate interest in *fu* composition. He composed the *Huangxi* and initiated *fu* writing at the Hongdu Gate School. Men like Yue Song recruited shallow and lowly types, which Yang Ci referred to as Huandou, and Cai Yong compared to jester–entertainers. Their literary fashion and writings that they have left behind are not worthy of our attention.[250]

Liu Xie then dismisses Hongdu Gate Academy's writings as simply "not worthy of attention" (*mie ru* 篾如), a judgment completely similar to Yang Xiong's comment about Dongfang Shuo's compositions. [251]

1. 4. The end of Han dynasty, beginning of Wei.

Liu Shipei has stated that Emperor Ling's attitude is at the source of Jian'an 建安 literature (196–220).[252] Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) was one of the leading figures of the Jian'an period. His father Cao Song 曹嵩 (d. 193)[253] was the adopted son of the eunuch Cao Teng 曹騰 (d. late 150s),[254] so Cao Cao might well have had contact with the eunuchs' environment traditionally related also with the Hongdu Gate Academy. He passed his youth under Emperor Ling's reign and it is well known that once came into power his government policy was "to promote the talent alone" (*wei cai shi ju* 維才是舉).[255] Some scholars see in his attitude toward literature and intellectuals a possible influence of Hongdu Gate Academy's innovations.[256] Moreover, one of his favourite calligraphers was Liang Hu 梁鵠 (fl. 220),[257] a

[250] *WXDL* 9/45. 540, trans. Knechtges, 2010, p. 28.
[251] In the *Fayan* he states about Dongfang Shuo: *qi liufeng yishu, mianru ye* 其流風遺書，篾如也; *FY* 17. 483.
[252] Liu Shipei, 1984, p. 11.
[253] *HHS* 78. 219.
[254] *HHS* 78. 219.
[255] In his "Qiu xian ling" 求賢令 (Order seeking the Whorthy), *SGZ* 1. 32.
[256] Zhang Chaofu, 2005, pp. 90-91; Feng Lun, 2006, p. 57; Hu Xu, 2006, p. 65.
[257] De Crespigny, 2007, p. 448. Knechtges records him as Liang Hu; Knechtges, 2010, p. 24.

member of Hongdu Gate Academy, who he summoned to his court once he came into power.[258] Thus Liu's assumption is not based only on speculations, but also has a clue. At Cao's court a new atmosphere was established. The recruited scholars friends of the ruling clan and they exchanged with Cao Cao, and his sons Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226) and Cao Zhi, poems, letters[259] and literary criticism of each other's compositions. [260] Liu Xie eulogises this period saying:

> 竝體貌英逸，故俊才雲蒸。[...]文蔚休伯之儔，于叔德祖之侶，俊雅觴豆之前，雍容衽席之上，灑筆以成酣歌，和墨以藉談笑。
>
> [Cao Cao, Cao Pi, and Cao Zhi], important as their positions were, all showed great respect for others who had outstanding literary talent. Hence many talented writers gathered around them like vapours and clouds[…] Those of the group of Wenwei (Lu Cui) e Xiubo (Po Qin), those of Yushu (Handan Chun) and Dezu (Yang Xiu) etc, goblets in hand, they proudly showed their elegant style and, moving with leisurely grace while they feasted, composed songs with a swing of the brush, and out of the well–ground ink created witty pieces that served as subject of talk and laughter."[261]

The critic is presenting a scene in which the patrons and their courtiers are mutually involved in entertaining activities; they feast together in symposia and often take the occasion of being together to exchange compositions. I would stress the attention to which kind of composition Liu Xie is referring; he says that with their brush they wrote down something about which "to talk and laugh" (*yi ji tanxiao* 以藉談笑). Cao Cao often has been described as being "sharp witted" (*jijing* 機警) and "unrestrained" (*fangdang* 放蕩), which means "unrestrained", "loose" and thus "unconventional."[262] He loved riddles and often played tricks when he was speaking.[263] It is known from several texts that a common feature of conversations among scholars at the time was humour. To have the capacity to make the listener laugh with clever wit was recognized as an appreciated skill (*cai*). This concept is

[258] *SGZ* 1. 31, n. 1; *JS* 36. 1064.
[259] The *Wenxuan* preserves several letters at chapters 40 and 42.
[260] Holzman, 1974, pp. 128-31.
[261] *WXDL* 9/45. 540-41, trans. Wu 2008, p. 24.
[262] *SGZ* 1. 2.
[263] See "Cao Man zhuan" 曹瞞傳, *SGZ* 1. 54, n. 2.

showed by the presence of the "Paitiao" 排調 (Taunting and teasing)[264] chapter in the Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444)'s *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語. In Liu's text, as Qian Nanxiu states, all the thirty–six chapters correspond to analogue categories "related to the observation and evaluation of people: their physical appearance, innate abilities, moral qualities, psychological traits, and emotions emerging from their political and social contact with others." [265] The "humorous talk" was one of the categories for the evaluation of personalities.

It is in this new context and atmosphere that the passage of the *Weilue* that records Cao Zhi and Handan Chun's meeting quoted at the beginning must be located. The skills performed by Cao Zhi in this occasion are codified in eight chapters of the *Shishuo xinyu*: the second, "Yan yu" 言語 (Speech and conversation), the third "Zhengshi" 政事 (Affairs of government), the fourth, "Wen xue" 文學 (Literature and Scholarship), the seventh, "Shi jian" 識鑒 (Recognition and judgment), the eighth, "Shang yu" 賞譽 (Appreciation and praise), the ninth, "Pin zao" 品藻 (Ranking with refined words), the twentieth, "Shu jie" 术解 (Technical understanding), and the twenty–first, "Qiao yi" 巧藝 (Skill and art).[266]

Cao Zhi wants to impress Handan Chun, a well known intellectual at the time, by showing him all the various skills he masters. This is the reason why Cao Zhi asks "How do you compare to me?" (*he ru ye* 何如邪) – a typical phraseology in character appraisal (*ren lun jianshi* 人倫鑒識),[267] and he can ask this type of question because he knows that Handan is able to judge.[268] Cao Zhi wants to be recognized as a brilliant member of the educated elite by one of his equals, who at the same time has to be suitable to the task of judging. They are mutually involved in the performance. Even if their social status is different, in these kinds of occasions they are at the same level. This new attitude between a member of the ruling clan

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[264] *Paitiao* 排調 is equivalent to *paitiao* 俳调, the stories contained are humorous as those narrated by the jesters, see Chen Hong, 2005, p. 31; *SSXY* 25. 779, n. 1.
[265] Qian Nanxiu, 2001, pp. 5-6.
[266] Qian Nanxiu, 2001, pp. 35-36.
[267] It rises in Late Han period (76-147), and first passed trough a moral-orientated stage (147–184). Later, during Cao's reign, it was ability-oriented (184–239), but the periods overlapped on each other; see Qian Nanxiu 2002, p. 26.
[268] Chen Hong and Meng Zhi, while analyzing this passage of the the *Weilue*, state that, even if Handan Chun was an official, his status was near to the one of jester, and this is the reason why Cao Zhi was able to perform all this kind of entertainment in his presence; Cheng Hong and Meng Zhi, 2005, p. 30. Of course this is not the case. Cao Zhi performs this show to Handan Chun because the latter was a respected scholar that was able to judge his skills.

towards his attorney created a new environment that was unthinkable before. Cao Zhi asks his question after reciting "thousands of words of *humorous works*" (*paiyou xiaoshuo*), which follows his performance of a barbarian dance and martial arts. This is only the beginning of his exhibition, but the question makes one understand that what he performed up to this point was already enough for obtaining a first judgment. What was the nature of this "humorous work"? Literally "jesters–like petty sayings," could also be translated. *Paiyou* means something the aim of which is entertaining, where humour is also involved. The term *xiaoshuo*, as usual, is more ambiguous. Some scholars state that this passage is referring to Cao Zhi's small rhapsodies (*xiaofu* 小賦), amusing and story–like compositions in rhyme on simple themes similar to those written by the Hongdu Gate's scholars;[269] others speculate that it could be something similar to Handan Chun's *Xiaolin.*[270] Unfortunately it is not possible to find more information about this issue. It can only be assumed that what Cao Zhi was reciting was not only peculiar to him, as he probably was sharing this area of interest with the educated elite of his time. His show, an "encycolpedia of the *shi*" as Connery defines it,[271] means precisely "what a literate could do." To confirm this, let's turn to another passage of the "Xieyin" chapter of *Wenxin diaolong*. Here the literary fashion during the Wei Jin period is clearly described:

> 至魏文因俳說以著笑書，薛綜憑宴會而發嘲調，雖抃笑衽席，而無益時用矣。然而懿文之士，未免枉轡；潘岳丑婦之屬，束晳賣餅之類，尤而效之，蓋以百數。魏晉滑稽，盛相驅扇，遂乃應瑒之鼻，方于盜削卵；張華之形，比乎握舂杵。曾是莠言，有虧德音。
>
> Thus Wei–wen (Cao Pi) used comic themes to write jokes, and Xuan Zong jested sarcastically during a diplomatic reception.[272] These jokes, though effective in producing merriment during a feast did not bring any benefits to their time, although good writers often went out of their way to write this type of works; Pan Yue's [247–300] composition on an ugly woman belongs to this type of texts, and Shu Xi's [c. 263–c. 302] on a pastry peddler is one of this kind - they knew they

[269] Wang Yunxi, 1991, pp. 76-77; Feng Lun, 2006, p. 59.
[270] He Shihai states that the conversation that Handan exchanged with Cao Zhi inspired him to record the *Xiaolin;* He Shihai, 2009, p. 72.
[271] Connery, 1998, p. 97.
[272] *SGZ* 53. 1250.

> were wrong but still they wrote them;[273] [like these two] there were no less than one hundred authors. The humorists (*guji*) during the Wei and the Jin accentuated the trend by their mutual influence. The nose of Ying Yang 應瑒 (? –217 AD) was compared to an egg whose half part has been stolen, and the head of Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300 AD) compared to a pestle. These ugly words are harmful to the words that conform to moral principles.[274]

The passage cited above presents a textual problem. The first sentence can also be translated as: "collected together humorous talks (*paishuo*) and compiled a comic book (*xiaoshu* 笑書)." As far as the first three characters are concerned (*zhi wei wen* 至魏文), all the Ming dynasty editions of *Wenxin diaolong* has the character *da* 大 instead of *wen* 文 so that the phrase referred to by Cao Pi changes in *zhi wei da* 至魏大. The character *da* 大 thus could actually be a mistake for *ren* 人, and in this case it could be that the phrase refers to "someone of Wei" (*zhi wei ren* 至魏人)[275] that wrote a humoristic book. Wang Liqi, noting that the supposed book of Cao Pi is not recorded anywhere, believes that the hypothetical man of Wei could be Handan Chun 邯鄲淳, so that "xiaoshu" actually stands for the *Xiaolin* 笑林.[276] This is somehow similar to the position of Yao Zhenzong, who supposes that this passage means that Cao Pi ordered Handan to compose the *Xiaolin*.[277] With the textual materials available at present times it is not possible to give an indisputable answer. Was "xiao shu" a Cao Pi's text (the Emperor "Wen of Wei" *wei wen* 魏文), or was it the work of Handan Chun ("a man of Wei" *wei ren* 魏人)? When it is said that Cao Zhi told "one thousand humorous stories" we can assume that apart from the *Xiaolin* there were other texts of the same nature. Liu Xie's description makes it clear that this literary trend was shared by most of the well–learned courtiers of the time. They were *guji* 滑稽, funny and entertaining, and their compositions had mainly a social nature. Liu defines this type of writing as a "disgrace to moral principles" (*you kui deyin* 有虧德音), because they are *wuyi* 無益, useless, being amusing but lacking

[273] Pan Yue's "Choufu fu" 醜婦賦 is lost; Shu Xi's "Bing fu" 餅賦 can be found in the *QJW* 87. 1962-1963.
[274] *WXDL* 3/15. 194.
[275] *WXDL* 3/15. 200.
[276] Wang Liqi 1980, p. 104, n. 7.
[277] Yao Zhenzong, 1936, p. 480.

educative aims, as was earlier the case with Mei Gao, Dongfang Shuo and Hongdu Gate students' writings.

Nevertheless, at Cao's court to be able to compose and recite humorous texts was regarded a skill, a talent, appreciated by educated men. It was one of the features of a new self fashioning of the intellectual and political elite of the Wei period. This kind of text had as its main purpose to entertain the scholars; no moral overall structure or hidden moral teaching, but fun and pleasure instead. This is the kind of social context that allowed the creation of the *Forest of Laughs*.

1. 5. *Conclusion*

From this brief excursus through history it can be seen that entertainment that involves "humour" was already present at the court of the sovereigns, at least from the Warring States period. But these entertainers, the jesters or *paiyou*, had a very low social position. In Han times, especially under Emperor Wu's reign, there is the presence of a literature with entertaining features, but its aim was to amuse the Sovereign and perhaps doing so to obtain protection and wealth (as the case of Dongfang Shuo shows). This is the reason why they were often compared to the *you*, or professional court jesters. At the end of the Han era the situation changed. As has been elucidated, the institution of the Hongdu Gate Academy promoted the production of a type of writing, the *fu*, previously considered "literature for jesters" (*you lei paiyou*), and established them as a standard, through which one was able to enter into an official career. But only with the transformation of literary panorama during Jian'an era, *paiyou* lost its negative connotation. *Paiyou* texts, being them *fu* or stories (*xiaoshuo*), were created by the courtiers not for entertaining the Sovereign, but the scholars themselves. The capacity to make someone laugh with entertaining stories, riddles and wit, was an ability (*cai* 才), a talent, required for somebody who wanted to belong to the educated elite. The shift of meaning of the *paiyou* word can provide an interesting glimpse into the Wei–Jin era. It illustrates how some cultural values and features changed with the collapse of the Han dynasty.

Chapter 2—To understand a story, to understand a text.

In the previous chapter, we have outlined the cultural context in which the *Xiaolin* has taken form, and we have highlighted the changes within the social strata of the educated elite which made possible the appearance of a new type of literary works, as the *Xiaolin* was. In this chapter, our inquiry aims to draw attention to the morphology and the structure of the brief narratives, which are collected under the title of *Xiaolin*. The *Xiaolin* consists of stories, whose narrative structures and plots are similar and sometimes identical to those found in earlier (Warring States-Han) collections of anecdotes, but their aim is entertainment. Their parallel versions contained in the works of the masters (*zi*) or in historical texts, instead, in general, were shaped to convey a moral or a didactic teaching. In order to understand how stories which do not present narrative innovations but instead mainly conform to those of the traditional anecdotal lore, could however change their reading paradigm, I will examine a string of similar stories collected from different kind of sources, in which *Xiaolin* is included. Four of the five stories analysed are found in pre Han and Han textual material. They have different contexts and purposes appearing in their narrative features, which however do not alter their general structure. In fact, all the four variants share the same frame motif (about the terminology used in the analysis see hereafter in this paragraph) which could be identified as the story of "a minister who is sent by his Lord to bring a swan goose-gift to the sovereign of another state and lose it." They share (in different number of occurrences) smaller motifs as well, which are embedded in the speech of the envoy protagonist. The fifth story, which appears identical in the *Xiaolin* and in pre-imperial texts, can not be regarded as a further adaptation of the same previous tale; rather, it is more likely a different version of some of the micro-motifs by which the previous stories were formed. This last story could be defined as the tale of "a man who bought for his Lord a pheasant, thinking it was a phoenix, but the bird-gift died." The similarity with the other group is mainly determined by the presence of a man who is bringing a gift to a sovereign, to the fact that this gift is a bird (in one a swan-goose, a gift considered precious and appropriated for diplomatic mission between two states, in the second a phoenix, the precious bird for antonomasia), and that the bird-gift does not arrive to its addressee

(in one it is lost, in the other it dies). These texts will be considered as independent realizations of the tradition, noticing what their different features say about the text in which they appear, about the author, and the audience to whom they are directed. On the basis of this analysis I will draw then some assumptions regarding the material arranged by Handan Chun.

To analyse the different stories I will use of some of the terminology of folklore studies. Within the field of general folklore studies some of these terms and approaches have been criticized for their imprecision. Nevertheless I found them useful for describing the relationships among a large number of narratives with different functional and formal attributes from a variety of times, periods, and genres, which is the basis of this research. We use here the term *tale-type* to identify a self-sufficient narrative.[278] A tale-type can be an *anecdote*, which is defined as a brief narrative "of a detached incident, or of a single event, told as being in itself interesting and striking,"[279] it may be fairly detached and free-standing, or connected with and embedded in a larger argument or narrative[280] and normally has named characters (in particular, historical anecdotes). We will use also *story* and *tale* as general terms to indicate self-independent narrative. With *motif*, we specify the smallest unit within a tale-type,[281] so as to say the smallest identifiable unit of the

[278] The concept of tale-type must be understood as flexible, it is not a constant unit that has to be detached in the narrative material, it will be identified according to the textual material taken in exam.
[279] *Oxford English Dictionary*, (ed. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner; Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989) p. 454.
[280] Gossman, 2003, p. 149.
[281] The birth of a systematic classification of the folktales (so the creation of a terminology) is due to Anti Aarne and Stith Thompson. Antti Aarne (1867-1925) was a Finnish folklorist. He published a first attempt of classifying folktales (*Verzeichnis der Märchentypen*, first published in 1910) which after was elaborated and amplified by the American folklorist Stith Thompson (1885-1976), in his *The Types of the Folktale* (Antti Aarne - Stith Thompson, 1961, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, Helsinki). This system, known as AT-number system, from the names of its two authors, identifies tales which have similar motif-contents and groups them into tale-types. Thompson also published a monumental work in six volumes called *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1955-1958, *Motif-index of folk-literature: a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends.* Revised and enlarged edition. Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press) in which are identified the narrative elements of a tale type. This work has been updated recently by Hans-Jörg Uther (2004, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the system of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, FF Communications, No. 284, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia) but it leaves out the East Asia tradition. As far as Chinese folktales are concerned, the works that try to systematize the anecdotal heritage are very few; one early work is: Wolfram Eberhard, 1937, Typen Chinesischer Volksmärchen, FFC 120, Helsinki (it is possible to find it in Chinese as: Ai Bohua (Wolfram Eberhard) 艾伯華, 1999, *Zhongguo minjian gushi leixing* 中國民間故事類型, Beijing, Shangwu); see also Ding Naitong 丁乃通, 1986, *Zhongguo mingjian guoshi leixing suoyin* 中國民間故事類型索引,

anecdote's make up: an action, a character, an item. The motifs work together and compose the narrative structure of the tale-type.[282] The terminology used will not serve to impose a classification upon the textual material, but only to extract and analyse the material presented.

Our research starts from an annotation made by Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 in his *Guanzhui bian* 管錐編, in the paragraph concerning the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan" chapter. Here he listed a group of stories which he identified as being the same tale-type. He stated: "They have the same kind of plot, it is one story, but transmitted in different ways."[283] He only recorded in which texts the anecdotes appeared, without giving details or attempting an analysis.[284] The focus of this chapter begins from his brief statement, and attempts to highlight how similar anecdotes worked in different kinds of texts, how similar motifs were shaped to fulfil different aims, in a survey which concerns Warring States time to early Wei period.

Beijing, Zhongguo minjian yishu (based on AT system). A survey on the state of the field can be found in Hans-Jörg Uther, 2009, "Classifying tales: remarks to indexes and systems of ordering" in *Narodna umjetnost*, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 15-32.

[282] A different approach to the folktales was made by Vladimir Propp (*Morphology of the Folk tale*, 1928). Propp criticized Aarne's classification of motifs because Aarne did not inquiry on what a motif did in a tale. Propp, instead, analysed the basic action components of a tale. He identified 31 different plot elements which he called "functions" but he limited his analysis to only one kind of folktale, the AT 300-749 tale-type. His "proto-structuralist" approach greatly influenced thinkers as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. His approach actually has been used to study Indian tales (Alan Dundes, 1964, *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales*, Helsinki, FFC 195) and African tales (Denise, Paulme, 1963, "Le garçon travesti ou Joseph en Afrique," in *L'Homme* 3, No. 2, pp. 5-21) but to my knowledge not for the Chinese ones.

[283] Qian Zhongshu, 1979, p. 380.

[284] The criterion by which he grouped together the stories conforms to Propp's understanding of *function*, which is "an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (Propp, 1994 p. 21). These anecdotes, in fact, have different personages (the names of the dramatis personae are irrelevant in Propp's classification) but they do some identical, or in some case very similar, actions. These actions (functions) in Propp's view, are the fundamental components of a tale and tales with identical functions can be considered as belonging to one type. I do not know if Qian had in mind the *Morphology of the folk tale* (published in 1928 in Russian and in 1961 in English. *Guanzhui bian* was published by the Zhonghua shuju in 1979 and displayed Qian's broad knowledge of Chinese, Greek, Latin, English, French, and even Italian cultural traditions), as he does not cite it in his text. Maybe he only deduced the analogies between the anecdotes, without having in mind a defined classification system.

2. 1. A man of Chu got a pheasant: Narrative variation and motifs' adaptation in ancient anecdotal lore — a case study.

The passages detected by Qian Zhongshu from different sources come from six different works. In rough chronological order these are: the *Lu Lianzi* 魯連子 (? 3rd century BC), the *Yinwenzi* 尹文子 (4th century BC), the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (2nd century BC), the *Shiji* 史記 (1st century BC), the *Shuiyuan* 說苑 (late 1st century BC), and the *Xiaolin* 笑林.[285] The passages can all be defined as anecdotes, which generally speaking in traditional Chinese literature are unit-structures embedded in the "historical" writings and works of the masters (*zi*). Often they present themselves as historical[286] as they talk about real historical figures (real or believed-in-this way). Frequently, anecdotes appearing in different sources share narratives similar in wording, plot and structure but with different chief characters. Jens Petersen, quoting Lau,[287] defines these parallel versions of a story as "illustrative stories:" a kind of narrative in which the "historical figures themselves are unimportant" but where "the important question is which point is being illustrated,"[288] i.e. these anecdotes arrange facts related to the past in order to express a more or less overt didacticism.[289] David Schaberg states that the anecdote suggests orality and that orally transmitted sayings and anecdotes were important in the formation of early Chinese historical writing, implying a performative context.[290] He clearly explains it saying:

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[285] Qian Zhongshu found another story similar to that of the *Xiaolin* in the *Lushi* 路史, a Song dynasty's work written by Luo B i羅泌 (1131–?). I will not discuss it here since I am interested in similar motifs and plot adaptations only for earlier textual material concerning Warring States to Wei period of time.

[286] Schaberg (2001, p. 172) defines it (addressing in particular to the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*) as "a brief narration (typically no longer than a few hundred characters) of interactions among historical agents that substantiates a particular judgment, expressed or implied, about the characters or about the event itself."

[287] Lau, 1983, postscript to *The Analects* (Hong Kong: Chinese U. P., 1979) p. 234; as quoted in Petersen, 1992, p. 2.

[288] Petersen, 1992, p. 2.

[289] As an example, in the *Zuozhuan* and *Hanshi waizhuan* the function of the text to make a judgment is often explicit and marked by exemplary remarks which normally conclude an anecdote; in the case of *Zuozhuan* the remark is introduced by the *junzi yue* 君子曰, and in the *Hanshi waizhuan* the concluding remark is made with the help of quotations from the *Odes*, preceded by a formula *shiyue* 詩曰 (the *Odes* say), see Schaberg, 2005a, pp. 178-180.

[290] Schaberg, 2001, p. 189, and pp. 315-324.

> "Historiographers frequently depict the use of historical knowledge as a rhetorical tool well adapted to the purpose of court deliberation. Speakers who draw on the authority of history do not, for the most part, adduce complete anecdotes, but instead cite fragments of inherited language and details from common knowledge of the past. Passages in which speakers recount events of the Spring and Autumn period make it clear that the anecdote was useful as an interested account of one individual's, family's, or state's relations with others. […] Warring States court deliberations, persuasions, and debates between thinkers of different schools would have been appropriate place for lessons drawn from events of the Spring and Autumn period. As brief as the rhetorical prescriptions of Xunzi and Han Feizi are, they suggest that the ability to use anecdotes well was a prized rhetorical skill. Certainly Han Feizi valued the anecdotal material he accumulated, much of which closely resembles the anecdotes of the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, not for the historical truths it contained but for the arguments it would substantiate. It is conceivable, then, that the anecdote was in early China typically adapted to polemical uses and that many of the anecdotes that have come down to us were retold for the sake of the arguments they supported and were shaped by their use in these arguments."[291]

The anecdotes, which will be analysed, are records of the process described above. Their similarities in motifs and structure suggest that they are examples of adaptation from a common anecdotal lore transmitted largely in an oral way. We are not interested in finding the original source of the story (which, moreover, is an impossible task) but to see how the story was changing. Hereafter we will describe each passage highlighting their similarities and their differences in order to learn more about particular meanings each variation conveys and what their didactic/entertainment value was.

[291] Schaberg, 2001, pp. 189-190.

2. 1. 1. The *Hanshi waizhuan*: The envoy of Qi loses a swan goose.

This study will commence with the story contained in the tenth *juan* of the *Hanshi waizhuan*, because it is the earliest undoubtedly datable source among those containing the first group of stories. The *Hanshi waizhuan* is a compilation of 306 "anecdotes, moral disquisitions, prescriptive ethics and practical advice, each entry normally concluding with an appropriate quotation from the *Shijing* which serves to reinforce the point of the story or argument."[292] The text was collected by Han Ying 韓嬰 (200–130 BC) during the reign of Emperor Wen of the Han (r. 177–157 BC). The anecdote says as follows:

> 傳曰：齊使使獻鴻於楚，鴻渴，使者道飲鴻，玃笞潰失。使者遂之楚曰："齊使者獻鴻，鴻渴道飲，玃笞潰失。臣欲亡，為夫兩君之使不通；欲拔劍而死，人將以吾君賤士貴鴻也。玃笞在此，願以汙事。"楚王賢其言，辯其詞，因留而賜之，終身以為上客。故使者必矜文辭，喻誠信，明氣志，解結申屈，然後可使也。詩曰："辭之懌矣，民之莫矣。"
>
> The tradition says: "The state of Qi sent its envoy to donate a swan goose[293] to the state of Chu. The goose was thirsty, [so] the envoy, along the way, quenched its thirst but the bird escaped from the cage.[294] The envoy then went to Chu and said [to the King]: "I, an envoy of the state of Chu, [came here] to offer [your Majesty] a swan goose. The bird was thirsty and along the way I quenched its thirst, and it escaped from the cage. I desired to run away, [but in doing so][295] I might have interrupted the relationship between the two lords; I

[292] Hightower, 1993, p. 125.

[293] Hightower (1952, p. 327) translates *hong* as only "goose;" but *hong* is not a normal goose, it is a precious one (maybe the *Anser cygnoides)*, used as an exchanging gift between lords. Moreover, the value of the bird better reveals the link with the *Xaiolin*'s story, in which the bird becomes a "phoenix."

[294] According to Yu Yue 俞樾, c*hi*笞 here could stand for *luo*荅 "bamboo basket, cage;" *Jue* 玃, according to Zhao Huaiyu 趙懷玉, could stand for *jue* 攫 "to grab" (*HSWZ* 10.413, n. 1) and placing the bird as the subject of *jue*, he gives the translation "the swan seized the cage and escaped," see Zhao Shanyi, 1938, p. 232. Lai Yanyuan follows Zhou Tingcai 周廷寀 (Zhao Shanyi, 1938, p. 232), considers *juechi* 玃笞 a binomial, and translates: "The bird escaped from the cage," *HSWZ* 10. 413-414. James Hightower translates in the same way but leaves "basket" instead of "cage," Hightower 1952, p. 327.

[295] Lai Yanyuan does not emend the text, he leaves *weishi* 爲失. Hightower follows the emendation made by Zhou Tingcai, who corrects *weishi* in *weifu* 爲夫; Zhao Shantai records *weifu* too, citing as a

> desired to draw the sword and kill myself [but] the people would have thought that my lord despises gentlemen but cherishes geese. Here it is the [empty] cage, I submit myself at your disposition." The King of Chu esteemed his speech, and regarded his words eloquent; so he asked him to stay and rewarded him; for all his life he was considered a lifelong retainer of the highest category [at Chu's court]. Therefore, an envoy must speak dignified language appropriate to the occasion,[296] express sincerity and trustworthiness, show integrity, solve problems between the states;[297] and only under these conditions he can be an envoy. The *Odes* say: [298] "If your words were gentle and kind, the people would be settled."[299]

In this anecdote, five narrative motifs (sequences) can be identified: 1. An unnamed envoy of the Qi state is sent with a gift of a precious bird to an unnamed Lord of Chu; 2. Trying to quench the bird's thirst, he loses it; 3. He presents himself to the Lord of Chu with an empty cage; 4. He performs an eloquent explanatory speech; 5. He is rewarded for the appropriate way he has solved the situation. In order to comprehend the text to define its narrative structure is not enough; its ideological agenda to which the anecdote is subjected must also be identified. The story is introduced by the formula *zhuan yue* ("a tradition says," "the teaching says"), which is a way to connect this story with other writings or unwritten traditions.[300] Hightower has tried to identify which were the previous textual sources of *Hanshi waizhuan*'s anecdotes,[301] but he also said that "many of the anecdotes which [Han Ying] uses were probably part of a corpus of story and folklore not specifically associated with any one text or school of thought and hence not restricted to a unique literary form. These constituted a large body of themes which for literary purposes were part of the public domain and as such appear in several Han dynasty

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proof the passage contained in the *Taiping yulan* that records: *yu wang qu wei* 欲忘去為, with *qu* being corrupted into *shi*失, *TPYL* 916. 4062; Zhao Shantai 1938, p. 233.

[296] Hightower (1952, p. 328): "Truly an envoy must strive for elegant speech."

[297] Literally: "Undo tied button."

[298] Section "Daya" 大雅 of the *Shijing*, ode "Ban" 板 (Ode n. 254), *ShJ* p. 843; trans. Legge, 1879 (online edition). Trans. also by Karlgren: "If your words are kind, the people will be tranquillized;" Karlgren, 1950, p. 212.

[299] *HSWZ* 10. 413.

[300] Regarding this formula Hightower says that when it is not possible to trace the written text to which the quotation belongs we could also think about the oral tradition. The oral tradition "undoubtedly played an important part in the teaching of the schools attached to the Classics, and any saying or dictum an author considered worth emphasizing might rate a 'tradition has it';" Hightower 1952, p. 5.

[301] Hightower 1948, Appendix 3, Tables 3, pp. 293-300.

compilations of widely divergent aims and purposes."[302] In this sense, it is not easy to trace the original source of a story, but the reason why it was preserved in this text can be defined. In the case under examination, the anecdote is preserved to illustrate an exemplum of ritually prescribed conduct. In particular, the reading is explicitly guided at the end of the story where it is said: "An envoy must speak a dignified language appropriate to the occasion, express sincerity and trustworthiness, show integrity, solve the problem between two states." The story proposes a model of conduct for the envoy of a state. The moral message, however, is not conveyed by the narration of the events *per se*, but by the eloquent speech of the protagonist. The speech, arranged rhetorically, presents the reason why the envoy chose (rightly as the conclusion of the story shows) to bring the empty basket to the Lord of Chu and honestly admit his fault. The envoy in his speech presents two other alternative ways of conduct in the given situation and the negative results they would lead to if chosen, results, which would affect the envoy's lord. The alternatives conceived by the envoy are: a. to escape to another state, but this would result in damaging the relations between Qi and Chu; b. to kill himself, but this would make the people think badly about his lord. Therefore, he resolves the dilemma by taking responsibility of his act and submits himself to the Lord of Chu.[303]

The actions of the envoy appear to be in accord to ritual propriety (*li* 禮),[304] which is conceived as the way to govern interstate relations and the social intercourse within society.[305] The concept of *li* in the *Hanshi waizhuan* is mainly understood as the *modus operandi* to maintain a state in order. It permeates most of the anecdotes; it expresses the hierarchical order and is the key to interpretation of the world.[306] At the *juan* 4 it is said: "The prince is one who distributes according to *li*; he is just to all [in his gift] and without prejudice. The subject is one who serves his prince according to *li*; being loyal and obedient, he is never lax;"[307] while in another

[302] Hightower, 1948, p. 242.
[303] We will see later that the particular rhetorical arrangement of these two hypotheses is a formula used in other stories.
[304] *Li* is translated as "ritual propriety" according to Schaberg, 2001, p. 14.
[305] A similar understanding of the concept of *li* is found in the *Yanzi chunqiu* see Sato, 2003, pp. 215-216.
[306] *Hanshi waizhuan* cites several passages from the *Xunzi* (see Hightower 1952, p. 3), which also often uses the formula *shi yue*, the *Odes* say. For the textual relationship between the *Hanshi waizhuan* and the *Xunzi* see Sato, 2003, p. 28-29. On the concept of *li* see Luo Lijun 羅立軍, 2007, "'Hanshi waizhuan' de li zhi sixiang"《韓詩外傳》的禮治思想, in *Lilun yuekan*, No. 5, pp. 73-78.
[307] 君人者以禮分施, 均遍而不偏, 臣以禮事君, 忠順而不解; *HSWZ* 4.161, trans. Hightower 1952, p. 135.

passage it remarks: "*Li* is the ultimate in establishing distinctions; it is the foundation for strengthening a state; it represents the basis for merit and fame."[308] It is because the envoy acted according to ritual propriety, posing the interest of his state and ruler before his life, that at the end he is rewarded. The story then is not only a prescription to envoys, more generally, conveys to the reader the message that to act according to ritual propriety is repaid (*bao* 報). The brief quotation from the *Odes* at the end, typical of this text, has the role of paragraph-capping *sententiae*.[309] The anecdote is not functional to the understanding of the ode; instead, the brief quotation of the poem expresses the practical use of it, to seal an argument expressed previously or give it a properly moral turn.[310]

Han Ying was the founder of one of the three schools of exegesis of the *Odes* which appeared in Han times[311] but none of the exegetical texts listed in the "Yiwenzhi" and ascribed to his school remain.[312] Only the *Hanshi waizhuan* is preserved. Hightower suggests one reason that maybe "its discursive nature found readers who were not attracted to an outmoded interpretation of the Shi, but to whom it was an acceptable anthology of extracts from early literature. The pervading moral tone, combined with a nominal association with the classic, kept the book from the suspicion of frivolity; at the same time it contains much of interest to even the casual reader."[313] The anecdotal nature of the text appealed to different kinds of readers, not only those who shared the vision of the moralizing framework underneath the narratives but also those who just took pleasure in reading stories. Nevertheless, the text was not created to entertain the reader. It had a didactic agenda to which all the narratives contained in the book were adapted; their plots, in fact, were driven to an end in which all the actions presented were followed by their consequences; their results make manifest the teaching to learn, which is often clarified by a comment external to the narration of the events.

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[308] 禮者、治辯之極也，強國之本也，威行之道也，功名之統也; *HSWZ* 4. 145, trans. Hightower 1952, p. 133.

[309] Schaberg investigated the similar formulas *zhuan yue* and *junzi yue*; see 2005a, "Platitude and Persona: Junzi Comments in Zuozhuan and Beyond", in *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism, And Ideology: Chinese Historiography And Historical Culture From A New Comparative Perspective*, Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer (ed.), Leiden, Brill, pp. 177-196.

[310] Hightower, 1948, p. 236.

[311] The three schools were Han 韓, Lu 魯 and Qi 齊; for more information see Hightower, 1948, pp. 251-256.

[312] *HS* 30. 1708.

[313] Hightower, 1948, p. 267.

2. 1. 2. The *Shuiyuan*: Wu Ze of Wei loses a swan goose.

The *Hanshi waizhuan* became a source and maybe an inspiration for several other texts, compiled with different purposes, which appeared in Han and later times. In particular, Liu Xiang clearly borrowed a great amount of material from Han Ying for the compilation of his own collection of stories. He took seventy-eight paragraphs with slight modifications for his *Shuiyuan* 說苑,[314] thirty-seven for the *Xinxu* 新序and eleven for the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳.[315] A version of the story previously analysed appears in the *Shuiyuan* (presented to the throne in 17 BC), which, similarly to the *Hanshi waizhuan*, is a compilation of anecdotes collected mainly from previous sources.[316] It is organized in 20 *juan*, and each *juan* concerns a specific theme (a feature which is lacking in the *Hanshi waizhuan* and shows a better defined structure). In general, most of the chapter titles illustrate the political nature of the anthology; we find "Jun dao" 君道 (The way of the Sovereign),[317] "Chen shu" 臣術 (The methods of the Minister),[318] or "Zheng li" 政理 (Principles of administration).[319] The author, Liu Xiang, was not then a mere compiler; rather he arranged the material according to his own understanding of good government and ethics. He selected and arranged the narratives of the traditional anecdotal lore to show exempla of political principle to the emperor. The story is part of the twelfth chapter, "Feng Shi" 奉使 (Envoy sent to diplomatic mission), and it says:

> 魏文侯使舍人毋擇，獻鵠於齊侯。毋擇行道失之。徒獻空籠，見齊侯曰：
> "寡君使臣毋擇獻鵠，道飢渴，臣出而飲食之，而鵠飛沖天，遂不復反。
> 念思非無錢以買鵠也，惡有為其君使輕易其幣者乎？念思非不能拔劍刎頭`
> 腐肉暴骨於中野也，為吾君貴鵠而賤士也。念思非敢走陳蔡之間也，惡絕

[314] I follow Martin Kern's reading of the first character of Liu Xiang's work說, as *shui* (persuasion) instead of *shuo* (explanation or discourse). See Kern and Hegel, 2004, pp. 173-174, n. 21. See also Kern, Martin, 2000, "'Persuasion' or 'Treatise'? – The Prose Genres shui and shuo in the Light of the Guwenci leizuan of 1779," in *Ad Seres et Tungusos*: *Festschrift für Martin Gimm*, ed. Lutz Bieg, Erling von Mende, and Martina Siebert, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, pp. 221-243.
[315] Hightower, 1948, p. 250. All the borrowings are indicated in the notes to his translation of the text.
[316] *HS* 30. 1727.
[317] *SY* 1. 1-33.
[318] *SY* 2. 34-55.
[319] *SY* 7. 143-172.

兩君之使。故不敢愛身逃死，來獻空籠，唯主君斧質之誅。”齊侯大悅曰：“寡人今者得茲言三，賢於鵠遠矣。寡人有都郊地百里，願獻於大夫以為湯沐邑。”毋擇對曰：“惡有為其君使，而輕易其幣，而利諸侯之地乎？”遂出不反。

The marquis Wen of Wei sent his attendant Wu Ze[320] to donate a swan goose to the Marquis of Qi. Wu Ze, on his way to Qi, lost it. He only presented an empty cage and, once he had an audience with the Marquis of Qi, he said: “Our Sovereign sent [me], the minister Wu Ze, to donate a swan goose [to You]. Along the way, [the bird] was hungry and thirsty, so your minister took it out of the cage and fed and quenched its thirst, but the swan goose flew off to the sky and never came back. I thought that it is not because I have no money to buy another one, but as my Lord’s envoy, how can I so lightly treat the gift of my Sovereign?[321] I thought that it is not that I can not draw a sword and cut off my head, [let my] body putrefies and [my] bones be exposed in the wilderness, [but this could mean] that my lord cherishes geese but despises gentlemen. I thought that it is not that I do not dare to escape to the states of Chen or Cai,[322] [but in doing so] I would abruptly cut the relationship between the two countries (Wei and Qi). This is the reason why I do not dare for treasuring myself to escape death, so I came here with an empty cage, [to let] only the Lord of Qi put me to death.”[323] The marquis of Qi was very pleased and said: “Today, I heard these three phrases, they are better than receiving a swan goose.[324] In the suburbs of the capital I have a piece of land of 100 *li*. I would like to give it to you as a feud.” Wu Ze answered: “How can it be possible that an envoy who took so lightly his Sovereign’s gift could receive a piece of land from a feudal lord as a present?” He then left and never came back.[325]

[320] We do not find elsewhere information about this character, Lu Yuanjun 1967, p. 416.
[321] Lu Yuanjun probably understands *bi* 幣 as money, translating: “As my Lord’s envoy, how can I so lightly spend the money of my Sovereign?” (1967, p. 417). Instead, I translate *bi* as “present, gift” following the understanding in the *Yili* 儀禮; Li Xueqin, 1999, p. 124.
[322] Maybe an echo of *LY* 11/2. 109.
[323] Literally: “to put me to death by an axe”; *fuzhi* 斧質 stands for *fuzhi* 斧櫝, a way to carry out the death sentence. See Lu Yuanjun, 1967, n. 6, p. 417.
[324] In translating this sentence, I follow Wang Ying and Wang Tianhe, who understand *san* 三as referring to the sentences in which the speech of the envoy is divided; see Wang Ying and Wang Tianhe, 1992, p. 537. Lu Yuanjun translates: “Today I heard these words, they are better than receiving three swan geese:” 寡人今天聽了這些話，勝過得到三隻天鵝; Lu Yuanjun, 1967, p. 417; I believe this is wrong.
[325] *SY* 12. 309.

The narrative motifs of the story are the same five found in the *Hanshi waizhuan*'s passage albeit with slight changes. The names of the personages change but their main actions are identical: 1. The envoy Wu Ze of Wei is sent to gift a precious bird to the Marquis of Qi; 2. Trying to quenching the bird's thirst (it is added here the bird's hunger detail) he loses the bird-gift; 3. He presents himself to the Marquis of Qi with an empty cage; 4. He performs an eloquent explanatory speech; 5. He is offered a reward.

Firstly we have to notice an attempt to present the story as a historical fact. The two personages in the story are given names that sound historically reliable. The Marquis Wen of Wei (r. 446–396 BC) was the first ruler of the State of Wei during Warring States period. He established his reign as one of the strongest states at the time. Sima Qian records that he received the teaching of Zi Xia 子夏 (507–420 BC),[326] one of Confucius' disciples, and he had at his service the famous Ximen Bao 西門豹[327] and Li Kui 李悝.[328] The envoy is named Wu Ze 毋擇. Though he is not known from other texts, still, identifying him with a name makes the account more historically trustworthy.

To arrange an anecdote as historically plausible is an important feature of traditional anecdotal lore. It is, for example, one of the main features of the anecdotes of the *Zuozhuan* or the *Guoyu* 國語.[329] As far as *Shuiyuan*'s anecdote is concerned, being a moral and a political exemplum addressed to the emperor, its historical trustworthiness will remind the emperor of historical precedents and their consequences, reinforcing in this way the morality that it conveys.[330] In this version of the story, less space is allocated to the narrative description of the actions done by the envoy; what happened and the reason why the bird got lost, in this case, are narrated by the envoy himself. The story is centred on his speech. Similar to the account in *Hanshi waizhuan*, the envoy performs a rhetorically arranged explanation of the events in which the main focus is the hypothetical alternatives that the envoy could have chosen instead of bring an empty cage and their fatal consequences. The

[326] *SJ* 44. 1839, *SJ* 121. 3116.
[327] He served as a magistrate of Ye district, *SJ* 44. 1839. Two stories about him are also recorded in Chu's addition to the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan," *SJ* 126. 3211-3213.
[328] In the *Shiji* recorded as Li Ke 克, *SJ* 44. 1839-401.
[329] On this topic related to these texts see Kern, 2010, pp. 47-51.
[330] Jens Petersen (1992, p. 3) regarding this issue states: "Historical figures […] appear often in illustrative stories because they impart the authority of their persons to the philosophical point. However, the stories are at best based on historical facts of a very superficial nature."

envoy in the *Shuiyuan* uses the same argument, adding further details regarding the possibility of replacing the lost bird. Compared with the *Hanshi waizhuan* story, this anecdote then presents further narrative details, and a more colourful description of the events. In particular, the presence of more hypothetical alternatives, which enrich the strength of the rhetoric discourse, shows a greater attention to the composition of narrative details. Assuming that sophistication of the arrangement of the plot is a type of development, this story compared to that of Han Ying's is the most developed version.

Unlike the version of the story in *Hanshi waizhuan* the lesson to be derived from the anecdote, instead of being guided by the words of an external narrator (the didactic ending), it is put to the mouth of the Marquis of Qi who praises the words of Wu Ze as being better (*xian* 賢) than receiving a precious gift. He then desires to reward the envoy. Here there is another important difference with the previous story. The reward is only proposed. The envoy this time, with indignation, refuses it explaining to the ruler that because he erred, he does not deserve any recompense.

The narrative structure of the *Shuiyuan* shows a stronger interest in the composition of the personages' speeches.[331] The author only rarely explicitly guides the reading of a story. Instead, the exposition of the teaching results from the words of the characters. In this case the anecdote culminates in the speech after which the envoy refuses the reward, making a strong moralising turn. Even if both stories highlight the principle of recompense (*bao*), recognizing in a worthy speech a value to reward,[332] the refusal of *Shuiyuan*'s character conveys a stronger moralizing agenda – a decisive illustration of ethical principles. According to the principle of *bao*, the one who receives "something worthy" from someone else (in this case the speech by which is exemplified a worthy conduct) can not avoid repaying it, but the one who bestows it does not have to expect a recompense. To this concept is dedicated an entire chapter of the *Shuiyuan*, the sixth *juan*, "Fu en" 復恩 (Repay a debt of gratitude) which starts saying: "The one who performs an act of *en* might not look for a recompense, the one who receives an act of *en* must repay it"

[331] In the *Shuiyuan* a large number of tales of remonstrance appear, which are centred mainly on the remonstrant's speech. The remonstrances are also classified in five categories (*SY* 9. 206), which "attests to the growing importance attributed to remonstrance as an official act" (Scaberg, 2005b, p. 202).

[332] The established notion of *bao* in Chinese narrative legitimates the idea of return where moral worthiness can be expressed with material wealth; see Schaberg, 2001, pp. 209-210, 215-216.

夫施德者貴不德，受恩者尚必報.[333] Afterwards, it says that the reason why a minister maintains a worthy conduct is not to receive a reward from his Lord. Hence, the end of *Shuiyuan*'s story differs greatly from the *Hanshi waizhuan* anecdote; it has a different message, a different teaching to learn. *Shuiyuan*'s envoy refuses the recompense. This choice makes his act even more ethically valuable as it shows his real disinterest in a reward. The *Hanshi waizhuan's* story instead lacks the claim for a so strongly idealized conduct, and it has a more pragmatic approach. Its didactic teaching about the envoy lets him accept the reward, and this closure is seen as right and appropriate.

2. 1. 3. The *Lu Lianzi*: Zhan Wusuo of Qi loses a swan goose.

A similar story appears in a fragment of the *Lu Lianzi* 魯連子, a text supposedly of Warring Sates period. The work is recorded for the first time in the *Hanshu*'s "Yiwenzhi," under the "Rujia" section with the name of *Lu Zhonglian* 魯仲連, in 14 *pian*. Its author is unknown. In the "Jingjizhi" 經籍志 of the *Suishu* 隋書 it is still under the "Rujia" section but recorded with the name of *Lu Lianzi*, in 5 *juan*.[334] The *Suishu*'s bibliographical chapter also adds that it refers to Lu Lian 魯連 (305–245 BC) of Qi 齊 (also called Lu Zhonglian)[335] who was called "master" (*xiansheng* 先生); in fact, he was a member of the Jixia Academy (*Jixia xuegong* 稷下學宮),[336] and *xiansheng* was the appellative given to its members. This text is not very famous. It is preserved only in fragments scattered in some collectanea.[337] Regarding Lu Lian as a historical figure, the *Shiji* contains his biography (*juan* 83). He is said to be a native of Qi and a lover of "grandiose and extraordinary schemes" (*qiwei titang*

[333] *SY* 6. 116.
[334] *SS* 34. 997.
[335] He appears with both names, Zhong maybe was his *agnomen*; Nienhauser, 1994, p. 281, n. 1.
[336] The Academy was active in Qi from 374 to 221 BC; Bai Xi 1992, p. 303. On Jixia Academy see also Sato, 2003, pp. 72-102; Bai Xi 白溪, 1998, *Jixia xue yanjiu: Zhongguo gudai de sixiang ziyou yu baijia zhengming* 稷下學研究：中國古代的思想自由與百家爭鳴, Beijing, Sanlian shudian.
[337] The text is last mentioned in the *Songshi* 宋史. Information about this text can be found in the 8th *juan* of Yan Kejun's *Quan shanggu san dai wen* (8. 65); Ma Guohan 馬國翰, in his *Yuhan shanfang ji shishu* 玉函山房輯佚書, gathered the *Lulianzi* in one *juan*; see Yao Zhenzong, 1936, p. 456.

zhi huace 好奇偉俶儻之畫策) by which he counselled different rulers. Nevertheless, he "was unwilling to serve as an official or to hold a post, delighting only in holding to his high principles."[338] He wandered to the state of Zhao 趙 serving the ruler with political advices. With his stratagems, he rescued Zhao from being conquered by Qin 秦,[339] but when he was presented with an office he said: "What I value in the knights of the world is how they avert troubles, resolve dilemmas, and cut tangled knots for others without ever receiving anything for it. If they receive something for it, that would be a transaction of shop keepers and travelling peddlers; I could not bear to do so,"[340] and he departed without ever coming back.[341] The Chinese scholar Bai Xi presumes that Lu Lian's advice against Qin's thirst for conquest was the reason why the text, ascribed to his name, entered in the "Rujia" section of the "Yiwenzhi."[342] However, according to the stories about his deeds and teachings, his thought can not be regarded too much similar to those of the traditional *ru* (such as Mengzi and Confucius). About the members of the Jixia Academy, Sima Qian said that they "composed books teaching on matters of [political] order and disorder;"[343] they then examined the reason why a state would establish order and then fall into chaos. In particular, Lu Lian discussed this topic centring his discourse on the relationship between *li* 利 (profit) and *hai* 害 (harm). He also pointed out *shi* 勢 (authoritative power) in relation with *shu* 數 (tactics, method of governing), all topics in which Mengzi was not interested.[344]

The passage of the *Lu Lianzi* noticed by Qian Zhongshu[345] is recorded in the *Chuxueji* 初學記, a Tang collectanea.[346] It appears also in the Song's *Taiping yulan*

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[338] *SJ* 83. 2459, trans. Nienhauser, 1994, p. 201.
[339] The siege of Handan 邯鄲 (258 BC) is narrated also in the *Zhanguo ce* (*ZGC* 20. 501), but Qian Mu states that the materials come from the *Shiji*'s chapter; see Qian Mu, 1986, p. 476.
[340] *SJ* 83. 2465, trans. Nienhauser 1994, p. 184.
[341] In another occasion he "fled into hiding by the seashore, and said: 'I would rather be poor and humble, mock the world and do as I will, than be rich and noble, but oppressed by others.'" 魯連逃隱於海上，曰：“吾與富貴而詘於人，寧貧賤而輕世肆志焉； *SJ* 83. 2469, trans. Nienhauser, 1994, p. 286.
[342] Bai Xi, 1998, p. 74.
[343] 著書言治亂之事, *SJ* 74. 2346, trans. Nienhauser, 1994, p. 182. Sato instead of the literally "composed book" (*zhu shu*) translates "made their opinion," stressing the oral nature of the teachings; Sato, 2003, p. 69.
[344] Sato, 2003, pp. 65-69. Bai Xi, 1998, p. 75. On the "shi shu" topic see Shi Xiaotong 石小同1994, "Shitan Lu Zhonglian de 'shishu'" 試談魯仲連的"勢數, in *Guanzi xuekan*, No. 1, pp. 34-38.
[345] Qian Zhongshu 1979, p. 380.
[346] Yan Kejun records *Chuxueji*'s occurence, see *QSGSDW* 8. 65.

太平禦覽, at the third chapter of "Yuzu" 羽族 (bird) category, under the "Hong" 鴻 (swan goose) section.[347] It is recorded as follows:

> 展無所為魯君使，遺齊襄君鴻，至澠而浴鴻，鴻失，其裝在。御者曰："鴻之毛物，可使若一，能買鴻耳。"無所曰："吾非不能買鴻也。是上隱君，下易幣，無所不取。"
>
> Zhang Wusuo[348] was an envoy of the Lord of Lu; he was sent to the Lord Rang of Qi offering a swan goose. Arrived at the Sheng river[349] he bathed the goose but it disappeared; only the cage remained. An attendant said: "The swan goose is a feathered animal, so it is possible to buy another goose as this one." Wusuo said: "It is not that I can not buy it, [but] for one part, it is to conceal something from my Lord, from the other, it is to take lightly [the Sovereign's] gift, [so] I (Wusuo) will not do it."[350]

As it appears evident, the story is still the same tale of an envoy who loses the bird-gift of his king, but it is very brief and its narrative arrangement and some elements differs from *Hanshi waizhuan*'s story and from that of the *Shui yuan*. The protagonists this time are Zhang Wusuo 展無所, an envoy whose name appears only in this fragment, the Lord of Lu 魯君, whose name is not specified, and the Lord Rang of Qi 齊襄君. The envoy loses the bird "bathing" the animal (an action which could be understood as a way to refresh the bird), and is left with an empty cage. This time, the possible solution by which he could avoid any consequences for his fault is given by an attendant, who manifests his presence only with this speech. The choice suggested and the consequent reply by the envoy are part of the speech of the *Shuiyuan*'s envoy: he could have bought another bird alike the one lost, but this would mean he takes too lightly his duty and is not able to cherish his Lord's property. Hence, the envoy refuses to do it.

Dividing the speech, which in *Shuiyuan*'s story was proffered by one character, between two personages makes the words of the envoy lose their rhetorical strength; in this way, the strength of the moral claim is also affected.

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[347] The record differs from that of *Chuxueji* only for few characters, see *TPYL* 916. 4063. In the same section, it is also recorded the *Hanshi waizhuan*'s story, *TPYL* 916. 4062.
[348] The *Taiping yulan* records *wu* 毋 instead of *wu* 無, *TPYL* 916. 4063.
[349] Its source is at the northeast of the city of Zibo 淄博 , in today's Shangdong province.
[350] *CXJ* 20. 480.

Furthermore a didactic explanation is not preserved in the text, as in the *Hanshi waizhuan*. This passage is only a fragment of its text, and Hightower, in Appendix 3 to his article on *Hanshi waizhuan,*[351] does not cite it as a parallel to Han Ying's story, even if he traces in detail the sources of the anecdotes. I do not know if he did it on purpose, as the text has many dating problems, or he was simply not aware of the similarity between the two texts. Some researchers doubt whether the *Lu Lianzi*'s fragments could be really original Warring States material or a product of a later generation.[352] Only relying on the fragment here analysed, it is not easy to arrive at any conclusion. The historicity of the fragment is actually doubtful,[353] but it is not of primary interest here. Even if the story was arranged in later times, it can be still regarded as being a part of the anecdotal lore grouped around the State of Qi, of which Lu Lian was an important character. It still shows how illustrative stories migrated from different groups of anecdotes, and it gives an example as to how they were adapted in Chinese textual tradition to provide a lesson.

[351] Hightower, 1948, p. 299.

[352] Qian Mu debates on the historical accuracies of the *Lu Lianzi*'s records. He states that the material which appears in the *Zhangguo ce* is taken from the *Shiji*, and that there are several anecdotes that record the same fact in different ways. Analysing the discrepancies, he states that the book is a product of a later generation. In particular, he affirms that those are not records of Lu Lian's times; Qian Mu 1986, pp. 473-477. I think that with "later generation" he means that those anecdotes could be from Han dynasty time. Even if it is not completely an original Warring States material, the stories narrated can be linked to Jixia academic thought. I am puzzled by Sato Masayuki's discussion about Jixia members. Even if he acknowledges Lu Lianzi as a member of Jixia academy (Sato 2003, p. 83) he never cites the *Lu Lianzi*. There are no comments on the *Lu Lianzi*'s fragments so that I do not know if he considers them a later time forgery or simply does not consider them because they are few.

[353] The name of the envoy, Zhang Wusuo, does not appear elsewhere. The only name that could be traced back in history is "Lord Rang of Qi." However, we have to make clear which lord we are talking about. *Jun* 君 as a substantive, generically identifies "a ruler" of a land. According to historical accounts, we find a Duke Xiang of Qi 齊襄公 (? - 686 BC) during Spring and Autumn period. In this case, the Lord of Lu could be Duke Huan of Lu 魯桓公, whose wife had an affair with the Duke Xiang; but it would be a story referring to Spring and Autumn period in a text entitled to a figure of Warring States time (as other fragments talk about Lu Lianzi deeds it is more probable that all the material was a record of his times) *SJ* 32. 1483. Another possibility would be that it refers to King Xiang of Qi 齊襄王 (?–265 BC), who actually was the King of Qi during Lu Lian's lifetime. Nevertheless, at this time the State of Lu had already ceased (in 249 BC), as well as the King of Lu's throne.

2. 1. 4. The *Shiji*: Chunyu Kun of Qi loses a swan goose.

The fourth variation of the story is among the anecdotes added by Chu Shaosun to the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan" chapter. In this case the protagonist is Chunyu Kun (385–305 BC), a person who also appears in the first part of the chapter written by Sima Qian, and in which his figure is exemplified as an advisor remonstrating with a king by an entertaining way of speech and behaviour.[354] Sima Qian groups his witty remarks and admonishments with those of the two jesters of pre-Han times, but does not provide much biographical information.[355] More biographical details about Chunyu Kun are included in *juan* 74 following the biographies of Mengzi 孟子 (?372–?289 BC) and Xunzi 荀子 (313–238 BC). Sima Qian acknowledges Chunyu Kun as a member of the Jixia Academy,[356] and describes him as having a "broad learning and a strong memory," and "not following any school in his studies,"[357] a feature which seems common to most of Jixia's thinkers.[358] Even if he served with his advices more than one king, he never accepted a position in the government.[359] Chunyu Kun, in the anecdotes recorded by Sima Qian, even when is grouped with the jesters, is regarded as a worthy figure. His speeches convey

[354] *SJ* 126. 3197-3199.

[355] In the "Guji liezhuan" Chunyu Kun is described as being a *zhuixu* 贅婿 (a man who lives with his wife's family), which specifies his probably low social status. Moreover his name is Kun 髡, which is the name of a punishment consisting in shaving off the head of a criminal. About this term and Chunyu's status, Qian Mu states that maybe he was born as a slave. *Kun*, as a punishment, was common among slaves. Later Chunyu became a respected thinker of Jixia Academy, and he called himself Kun; see Qian Mu 1986, p. 364. See also Guang Shaokui 廣少奎, 2004, "Lun Chunyu Kun" 論淳于髡, in *Guanzi xuekan*, No. 1, pp. 15-19, 28.

[356] *SJ* 74. 2346.

[357] 博聞彊記，學無所主; *SJ* 74. 2346, trans. Nienhauser, 1994, p. 182. In one note to the Nienhauser's translation is said that Chunyu Kun was a dwarf; see Nienhauser 1994, p. 182, n. 40. Actually, this is an error. He is described by Sima Qian as being "less than seven *chi* tall" (*SJ* 126. 3197); one *chi* during Zhou time was around 23 cm, so this makes him short, not a dwarf. Moreover, there is one story, ascribed to *Shuiyuan* but appearing only in some collectanea and not in the *textus receptus*, about the topic of his short stature. He was sent to the state of Chu as an envoy, and when the King of Chu saw him, he mocked him saying: "At Qi there is no one? Cause they sent a child, what about gowned up men?"; see *TPYL* 378. 1745, and *YWLJ* 96. 1671 (which records the story except the initial part with the King's mocking).

[358] Bai Xi 1998, p. 69.

[359] The same behaviour previously described for Lu Lian. About Chunyu Kun as a member of Jixia Academy see Bai Xi, 1998, pp. 68-69; Sato Masayuki is convinced that Chunyu Kun was an important government officer like a minister, rather than merely a policy councillor; see Sato 2003, pp. 78-79.

teachings and advices which always result effective and useful for the government.[360]

Chu Shaosun, as mentioned in the previous chapter, supplemented Sima Qian's part with several entertaining stories. Unlike Sima Qian, Chu Shaosun understood the expression *guji* as an adjective which qualified amusing stories. According to his different way of interpreting this key term, he then portrays Chunyu Kun in a different way. His anecdote on the lost bird reads as follows:

> 昔者，齊王使淳于髡獻鵠於楚。出邑門，道飛其鵠，徒揭空籠，造詐成辭，往見楚王曰：“齊王使臣來獻鵠，過於水上，不忍鵠之渴，出而飲之，去我飛亡。吾欲刺腹絞頸而死。恐人之議吾王以鳥獸之故令士自傷殺也。鵠，毛物，多相類者，吾欲買而代之，是不信而欺吾王也。欲赴佗國奔亡，痛吾兩主使不通。故來服過，叩頭受罪大王。”楚王曰：“善，齊王有信士若此哉！”厚賜之，財倍鵠在也。
>
> In ancient times, the King of the state of Qi sent Chunyu Kun to donate a swan goose[361] to the state of Chu. On his way, out of the city gate, the swan flew off. [Chunyu Kun], holding in his palm only an empty cage, decided to fabricate an excuse. He went to see the King of Chu and said: "The king of Qi sent me, his minister, to offer you a swan goose as a gift. When I crossed the water, I did not bear to let the bird thirsty, so I took it out [its cage] to make it drink, but it parted from me and flew off. I wanted to die cutting my stomach or strangling my neck, but I feared that someone could reproach my king [saying that] for a matter of birds, he made his officer (*shi*) commit suicide. A goose is a feathered creature, there are many kinds alike. I thought about buying one to replace it, but this is a dishonest behaviour and I was cheating my king. I wanted to run away and escape in another state but I feared that [doing so] I might have interrupted the relationship between my two kings. Therefore I came to admit guilt, I kowtow before your Majesty ready to receive the punishment." The King of Chu said: "Very well, the King of Qi has such a loyal minister!" He

[360] When Sima Qian summarises the reason why he decided to write the "Guji liezhuan" he says: "[Those people] were not dragged down by the customs of their times, nor did they fight for power or profit. Above and below there was no barrier for them which could hold them back. They did no harm to any man since they practised the Way," 不流世俗，不爭埶利，上下無所凝滯，人莫之害，以道之用。*SJ* 130. 3318, trans., with slight changes, Pokora, 1973, p. 54.

[361] Duan Yucai glossed *hu* 鵠 as *hong* 鴻, see the *hu*-entry at *SWJZ* p. 151, and *hong* at *SWJZ* p. 152.

> rewarded him generously, granting him wealth two times the value of the bird.[362]

As appears obvious from the first reading, this story shares the same basic narrative motifs and patterns of those encountered so far. However, the slight changes in plot and rhetoric make this anecdote differ greatly from the others. The action begins, as usual, with the envoy (this time Chunyu Kun) sent from his lord to offer a bird as a gift to the king of another state. The direction of the envoy's journey from Qi to Chu, and the fact that the kings' names are not recorded, are all features analogous to *Hanshi waizhuan*'s story. Unlike in the previous versions of the story, this one sets the events in an indefinite past (*xizhe* 昔者, "in ancient time"), at the same time featuring nameless kings. As a result it is made questionable the historical reliability of the story.

The envoy, like in the other versions, loses the bird-gift. At this point, there is a detail which explicitly shows a radically different reading of the well-known story: the reader is informed that Chunyu Kun "decided to fabricate an excuse" (*zao zha* 造詐), which literally also means "to cheat." The speech that follows in the presence of the King of Chu has to be read, then, according to this key: it is a "fabrication" (*zha* 詐), which also means "false speech" (*zha* [*yu*] 詐語), a lie. The envoy reveals to the king again that he has considered three alternative behaviours, but eventually rejected them and decided to behave differently. In explaining his decision to the king, he uses some of the vocabulary of high morality - he claims he does not want to be dishonest (*bu xin* 不信) and cheating (*qi* 欺) his lord. However in the context in which the story is told by Chu Shaosun it becomes evident that the words of refusal to make certain choices that could affect the envoy's king (and then the government of the state), which before were expressions of high moral integrity and models of virtuous behaviour, here are only a product of a clever mind that knows how to speak to escape troubles. The excellent speech expressed by a dignified language (*wen ci* 文辭) that has to express sincerity and trustworthiness (*cheng xin* 誠信), which in *Hanshi waizhuan* was required to be a successful envoy, here is employed to cheat the king.

[362] *SJ* 126. 3209-3210.

The modification of the tale from a moralistic-didactic exemplum to expression of amoral cleverness is brought to its extreme consequence in the end. The king is successfully cheated; in fact, he regards the "fabricated" words of the envoy as the expression of the envoy's trustworthiness (*xin* 信). Accordingly, he rewards Chunyu Kun generously which he accepts without hesitation. We could resume this anecdote as a story about how being able to arrange an effective speech can solve problems and bring profit. In this case, the problems to be solved do not regard primarily the government of a state, they are a private matter (how to escape a punishment and get advantage for oneself). Moreover, the principle of recompense (*bao*) that normally drives traditional Chinese narratives, and which could be exemplified in "good actions receive good recompenses, bad actions receive bad recompenses,"[363] here is completely absent. Dishonest behaviour is rewarded.

To have a deeper understanding of this kind of story it would be pertinent to return to Chu Shaosun's self-introduction placed at the beginning of his additions to the "Guji liezhuan" chapter.[364] It has already been pointed out that Chu's understanding of the word "guji" was a term qualifying "amusing" stories. Chu's self presentation, however, supplies supplementary information. He describes himself as being a person who likes to read (*hao du* 好讀) stories that belong to traditions considered non-orthodox (*waijia zhuanyu* 外家傳語). The commentary explains that with this term are identified the texts which were considered non-canonical (*fei zhengjing* 非正經), records transmitted in different versions (*shizhuan zashuo* 史傳雜説).[365] Chu Shaosun then declares that he created (*zuo* 作) narratives for those who "have a fondness for curious facts" (*haoshi zhe* 好事者) so that they could read them (*du zhi* 讀之). "Haoshi zhe" identifies a category of people interested in "various facts" (*shi*) in particular, which could refer to those who enjoy stories, circulating both orally and in written forms, whose historical accuracy is not necessarily verified.[366] The meaning that has "Haoshi zhe" in this particular context

[363] The principle of *bao* is functional to another key feature of Chinese traditional narrative, that is, "to exhort virtue and punish vice" (*quanshan cheng'e* 勸善懲惡); this is what is regarded as the "meaning of history" (*shiyi* 史意). On this topic see Tan Fan 譚帆, 2004, "Xiaoshuo xue de mengxing" 小説學的萌興, in *Wenxue pinglun* 文學評論, No. 6, pp. 13-22.
[364] *SJ* 126. 3203; see Chapter 1. 2. 2.
[365] *SJ* 126. 3203, n. 1.
[366] In the *Mengzi*, in the "Wan zhang" chapter, we find a similar occurrence of the term *haoshi.* Asked by Wan Zhang if it was true that Confucius, when in Qi, lived with a certain Qi Huan, Mengzi replied:

can be understood better by looking at a passage of the *Hanshu* related to Dongfang Shuo, in which this term appears again with somehow the same meaning. In the *Hanshu*'s passage Ban Gu explains why he can not avoid recording Dongfang Shuo's deeds and speeches, even if he deprecated his figure and considered his presence at court irrelevant: Dongfang Shuo was famous. In particular, he explains the reason of his fame. He says that the facts and events related to Dongfang Shuo (*qishi* 其事), centred on his wits and jest (*huixie* 詼諧), shallow and inconsequential (*bojian* 浮淺) as they were, were passing around among the people. They were then retold as street gossip, anecdotes repeated in the alleys. Moreover, Ban Gu says that in later times these anecdotes attracted the attention of people who liked such kind of matters (*haoshi zhe* 好事者). These people, he goes on, invented odd sayings and bizarre stories and attached them to his name.[367] In this passage, it can be inferred that there was a process in which a fact, transmitted like a gossip but which was still linked with the reality, is changed into something "fictional." Ban Gu's comment concerns only the oral transmission of the stories. However, what if the people who "enjoy such kinds of facts" were scholars? Chu Shaosun could indeed be one of these people. Being born when Dongfang Shuo was still alive, he was certainly aware of the curious stories surrounding his figure, and later he could have decided to write down some of them.[368] The presence of several anecdotes about Dongfang Shuo's character added by Chu Shaosun to the "Guji liezhuan" supports this hypothesis.[369] Regarding Chu's literary interests, then, the *waijia* texts[370] which were part of his readings, could possibly be constituted also by records of the "shallow and inconsequential sayings" cited above. These texts, then, could be connected with those classified as *xiaoshuo* in the "Yiwenzhi."[371] The bibliographical chapter, in fact, defines the *xiaoshuo* as being collections of street gossip and stories heard in the

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"'No; it was not so. Those are the inventions of men fond of strange things (*haoshi zhe*)." 否，不然也。好事者為之也；*MZ* 9A. 311.

[367] *HS* 65. 2873.

[368] It is a common process that anecdotes and stories "which circulate among persons in live social interactions such as conversations" could be gathered and arranged by an author into a written collection, so that the result is a form of literature; see Hansen, 1998, p. 272.

[369] *SJ* 126. 3205-3208.

[370] As far as "waijia" term is concerned, we have to notice that it is used again by Chu Shaosun to describe Dongfang Shuo's interest; he records: "[Dongfang Shuo] was fond of the Classics and the arts [of the Ru scholars], [but] he was paying more attention to the words of the other traditions (*waijia zhi yu*)" 愛經術，多所博觀外家之語。*SJ* 126. 3205.

[371] On this statement see Xin Deyong, 2005, pp. 8-9. Xin Deyong in particular discusses the historical inaccuracy of Chu's records about Ximen Bao 西門豹 (445–396 BC) added to "Guji liezhuan;" See Xin Deyong, 2005, pp. 6-15.

alleys, most of which are "superficial" and "unreliable;"[372] their contents, however, generally appear to be not completely different from other *zi* works or "historical" texts, so to define them as *zhuanyu* 傳語, *zashuo* 雜說, *shizhuan* 史傳could be, likewise, possible.[373] Chu Shaosun then recorded in an anecdotic form, which conforms structurally with the basic narratives part of more "orthodox" writings (texts of the masters and historical records), the stories about Dongfang Shuo circulating orally, so that he created a form of literature. However he was not interested in conveying a teaching or illustrating a moral claim; he recorded them only to entertain himself and the possible reader. Accordingly, the other anecdotes (other than those about Dongfang Shuo) collected by him in the "Guji liezhuan" also share the same criterion and show the reader that he is in the presence of an author who likes entertaining stories and who writes (*zuo*) them so that his reader, sharing the same interests (*haoshi zhe*), could read them (*du zhi*).

The story written by Chu Shaosun, according to what it is said above, does not show an interest in Chunyu Kun as a historical figure, nor in the record of his speeches as a member of the Jixia Academy. In contrast, the amoral cleverness of his figure arranged by Chu shows a taste for a rhetorical art of speech not linked to moralistic didacticism but with an entertaining purpose. In the previous chapter, it was presented that in Western Han times, especially under Emperor Wu's reign, there was a vivid interest in the art of rhetoric with an entertaining function. *Fu*-rhapsodies dominated the poetic court genre with their ornamental rhetoric and moral ambiguity.[374] Clever and witty argumentations (as those of Dongfang Shuo) were

[372] With *Jian* 淺, "superficial" are defined such works as: the *Yiyin shuo* 伊尹說, which probably contained the sayings of Yin Yi, the loyal minister of King Tang 湯 of Shang 商. Its material maybe converged in the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Yuan Xingpei, 1979, p. 181); the *Shi Kuang* 師曠 which appears also as a "bingshu" 兵書's text under the "Yinyang jia" 陰陽家 (*HS* 30. 1760). These two texts are defined also as *tuo* 託 "unreliable;" the same way in which are described the *Tianyi* 天乙, about King Tang of the Shang (Yuan Xingpei hypothesises that Sima Qian might have used it as a source for the compilation of the "Yin benji" 殷本紀 chapter, see Yuan Xingpei, 1979, p. 180) and the *Huangdi shuo* 黃帝說.

[373] For example the *Hanshu*'s bibliographical chapter records works as: the *Songzi* 宋子 ascribed to Song Qing 孫卿 and defined as containing sayings near to Huanglao 黃老 thought. Guo Moruo in his *Song Jian yinwen yi zhu kao* 宋鈃尹文遺著考, states that this text contains the lost teachings of Song Xing 宋鈃, a master of Jixia academy (see Yuan Xingpei, 1979, p. 184); or the *Fengshan fangshuo* 封禪方說 a text of Emperor Wu's time, written probably by a *fangshi.* The *fangshi* were responsible of the arrangement of the ritual for *feng* and *shan* solemn sacrifices, about which we have scarce accounts in historical records. Traditional *ru* scholars competed with them to obtain the Emperor's favour. It is not a surprise if other traditional scholars, as Liu Xiang and Ban Gu were, could have placed *fangshi*'s works in this category to belittle their words. See *HS* 30. 1744. See also note above.

[374] See Chapter 1. 2.

performed in the presence of the emperor, who showed that he was greatly amused by them.[375] These entertaining performances were primarily enjoyed orally, but Chu Shaosun's record testifies the shift of this topic from orality to the written text. As noticed above, he twice uses the verb *du* "to read" referring to an action which has as its object texts surveyed mainly for entertaining purposes.[376] He uses also the verb *zuo*, "to create, to write," which expresses a notion of authorship, which means that he was conscious of writing something "entertaining." He also identifies his possible readers (*haoshi zhe*). The presence of such an audience justifies the important changes that appear in the narrative of the anecdote analysed.[377]

The anecdotes analysed above have different protagonists who, however, perform identical or roughly identical actions. The anecdotes contained in the *Hanshi waizhuan*, in the *Shuiyuan*, and in the *Shiji* share at least five motifs which are essential to their plot:

1. A minister is sent by his lord to bring a gift to the lord of another state;
2. The minister loses the gift.
3. He brings an empty cage instead of the bird.
4. He performs an eloquent speech;
5. He is offered a reward.

Only the *Lulian zi*'s story, being it the briefest fragment, lacks point 5, and differs in point 4. All the stories, however, have in the speech of the minister the key lecture/message of the text. It is the direct speech that reveals the protagonist's inner world and the moral value that he transmits. As far as the motivation of the narrative is concerned, the anecdotes contained in the *Hanshi waizhuan* and in the *Shuiyuan* (even if the two texts differ in the arrangement of their structure,) are shaped to

[375] See Chapter 1. 2. 2.
[376] Martin Kern says that, as far as the *Shiji* is concerned, the only time anyone is reading a piece of literature is when Emperor Wu reads (*du*) Sima Xiangru's "Zixu fu" 子虛賦 (*SJ* 117. 3002), but at the same time he states that this account is not reliable because there are evidence which suggest that the Emperor did not read poetry by himself but enjoyed it by oral performance. He also shows that most of the forty-nine passages in which the verb *du* appears as "to read a text" are later interpolations (see Kern 2003a, p. 308). Chu Shaosun, in the passage we are analysing, uses also the verb *lan* 覽 as "to read;" this is the only occurrence in the *Shiji*, in which it normally means "to survey," and it refers to the Emperor surveying his realm; Kern 2003a, p. 308-309.
[377] To compare Chu Shaosun's authorship with Handan Chun's see Chapter 2. 2.

represent a point of truth, a moral teaching, an idea. Accordingly, the tale is adapted to follow such a purpose. In particular, the moral lesson which in the *Hanshi waizhuan* is expressed as a comment at the end of the story, and capped by a quotation of the *Odes*, in the *Shuiyuan* is shaped in the worthy words of the envoy protagonist; Liu Xiang decides to emphasise the dramatic dialogue, showing an interest in a more constructed nature of a prose rhetoric with a moralistic purpose. *Shiji*'s story instead has a different agenda. Chu Shaosun arranges the anecdote to appeal to the curiosity of the audience; accordingly, he adapts the basic motifs of the tale to his interest in a good story, which prevails over historical reliability, and to that of the readers who share his same interests. In the case of Chu Shaosun, his stories lack moral lessons, and instead are *artistically* oriented.[378]

As far as the speech of the envoy is concerned, it can be divided into other micro-motifs, which are portions of the speech of the envoy and are identified by the hypothesis made by the envoy about the alternative (and their fatal consequences) of bringing an empty cage. They range from one to three, in the scheme which follows:

1. To escape to another country, leading to sever the relationship between the two states. (*HSWZ*, *SJ*, *SY*).
2. To kill oneself, leading the people to think that the king cherishes birds more than his ministers (*HSWZ*, *SJ*, *SY*).[379]

[378] Karl S. Y. Kao (1985, p. 18) states: "A text may be adapted mainly because it tells a 'good story,' or for overtly 'reporting' a strange or fantastic event that appeals to the curiosity of the audience. As such, the adaptation will be guided by the consideration of generic conventions, psychological expectations, cultural taste, and particular biases of the author and the reader (audience). That is, they are *artistically* oriented.".

[379] In the *Hanshi waizhuan* there is another anecdote which seems to elaborate on this micro-motif, and which could be regarded as belonging to the macro-motif of "the subject who loses his Lord's bird." This story is borrowed (with slight changes) from the *Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋, a text of Warring States period which presumably collects the writings of Jixia scholars (Sato, 2003, p. 211, n. 78). The part which interests us is the remonstrance by which Yanzi persuades the lord not to kill the attendant who has lost the bird; it says: "Dengju, you were in care of the birds for our Prince, but you lost one. This is your first crime. You have caused our Prince to kill a man because of a bird. This is your second crime. You will be the cause of the feudal lords of the four [neighbouring] states, when they get words of it, believing that our Prince values birds above his officers. This is your third crime [The *Yanzi chunqiu* talks about only three crimes; see *YCC* 7. 464-466]. When the Son of Heaven hears of it; he will certainly degrade our Prince, so that the altars to Earth and Grain will be endangered, while [worship in] the ancestral temple will be broken off. This is your fourth crime. For these four crimes you deserve to be put to death without mercy;" (*HSWZ* 9. 375-376, trans. Hightower, 1952, pp. 298-299). Pretending to explain the reason why the attendant must be killed, in reality Yanzi presents to the king the fatal consequences which will follow a death punishment. This story appears also in the *Shuiyuan*, which quotes the earlier *Yanzi chunqiu*'s version (*SY* 9. 225). The explanation of the second and the third crime are conflated into one of the hypothetical choices that the envoy of our anecdote decides to discharge: to kill oneself.

3. To buy another bird, which is cheating the king (*LL*, *SJ*, *SY*).

According to what has been analysed thus far, it is impossible to reconstruct a "genealogy" of the story because of the presence of various texts with difficult dating. Moreover, according to the studies which discuss the development of tales "a chronologically early text does not even necessarily reflect a developmentally early form of narrative because narrative change is a function not of time but of a particular narrator on a particular occasion. Consequently, it is possible for a recent text to represent a relatively conservative line of tradition and for an older text to represent a more innovative line."[380] All the texts presented use the same story, which is part of a repository of illustrative stories, an un-systematized anecdotal lore of written and most probably oral tales. Three of them (*HSWZ*, *SY*, *LLZ*) used the story to illustrate a lesson to teach, a moral point, an appropriate behaviour. However, during the Han dynasty, in the time of Emperor Wu, the entertainment aspect of stories started to be appreciated, and evidence of this new aspect is found in the fourth story, that of the *Shiji*. In case of the story which has as its protagonist Chunyu Kun, it was retold mainly as entertainment by Chu Shaosun – who Timoteus Pokora rightly defines as "a narrator of stories."[381]

In the following part, then, the analysis of *Xiaolin*'s story and the evidence of its source will be presented. Following this, some general statements will be drawn about the text.

2. 1. 5. The *Xiaolin*: A man of Chu got a pheasant.

The anecdote is ascribed to the *Xiaolin* by the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, a Song dynasty's collectanea compiled by an equip of scholars guided by Li Fang 李昉 (925–996). It appears in one of the sections concerning the bird-category (*qinniao* 禽鳥) and is recorded as follows:

[380] Hansen, 2002, p. 8.
[381] Pokora, 1987, p. 232. See also Timoteus Pokora, 1981, "Ch'u Shao-sun—The Narrator of Stories in the Shih-chi," in *Annali, Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, No. 41 pp. 403–430.

楚人有擔山雞者，路人問曰：“何鳥也？”擔者欺之曰：“鳳皇也！”路人曰：“我聞有鳳皇久矣，今真見之，汝賣之乎？”曰：“然！”乃酬千金，弗與；請加倍，乃與之。方將獻楚王，經宿而鳥死。路人不遑惜其金，惟恨不得以獻耳。國人傳之，咸以為真鳳而貴，宜欲獻之，遂聞于楚王。王感其欲獻己也，召而厚賜之，過買鳳之值十倍矣。

There was a man of Chu who was carrying a pheasant. Along the way a man asked: “Which kind of bird it is?” “It is a phoenix,” he lied. The passer-by said: “I knew about [the existence of] the phoenix from a long time, today I see a real one. Do you sell it?” “Of course,” he answered. The passer-by bid one thousand pieces of gold, but [the owner of the bird] refused. He asked to add another thousand, and after that he got it. When [the new owner of the bird] was about to give it to the King of Chu, after one night the bird died. The man was not sorry for the loss of his money, he was only sad that he could not present [the bird to his king]. His fellow countrymen spread this story. Everyone thought that it was a real phoenix and it was precious, and that he desired to present it as a gift [to his sovereign]. The King was so moved by the fact that the man wished to give him [the precious bird], that he summoned him to reward him generously, ten times the amount the man paid to buy the phoenix.[382]

The stories quoted previously shared a setting typical of historical anecdotal narratives: a case of exchanging gifts between states as a practice of political relations. This time, instead, the story starts featuring two generic characters whose lives have no direct connection with the government of their state (identified as Chu) which is governed by an undefined king. The historical reliability of the narrative is not an issue anymore and the anecdote is treated as fictional.[383] Compared to the previous versions, this one seems to elaborate on more generalized motifs, which could be identified in: 1. A man is going to gift a lord a precious bird; 2. The precious bird-gift is lost. 3. Even if the bird-gift is lost, the man receives a reward.

As stated previously, dating and tracing the development of the stories is an impossible task. Moreover, in this particular case, the analysis is complicated by the fact that an identical anecdote appears contained in another text, the *Yinwenzi*

[382] *TPGJ* 461. 3781-82.

[383] This only means that the reader does not need to question the story’s historical reliability, which is not an issue anymore, but it does not mean that he should read it as “fiction,” in the sense of a defined self-conscious genre; nor the author writes it in this sense.

尹文子, traditionally ascribed to Warring States period. To understand the nature of *Xiaolin*'s story we need to analyse first its meaning inside the *Yinwenzi*.

2. 1. 6. The *Yinwenzi*: a man of Chu got a pheasant, a story about names and forms.

The *Yinwenzi* is recorded for the first time in the "Yiwenzhi" under the "Mingjia" 名家 section,[384] in which it is also specified that it is a record of King Xuan 宣 of Qi (350–301 BC) times.[385] In the bibliographical chapter of the *Suishu* it is added that the text contains the teaching of Yin Wen 尹文 (350–280 BC), a member of the Jixia Academy.[386] Yin Wen is sometimes paired with Song Xing 宋鈃 (382–300 BC), as if they were representative figures of the same current of thought;[387] however, most researchers now agree in seeing in the *Yinwenzi* positions close to Huang Lao teachings, meanwhile Song Xing's records reveal more mohist influences.[388] A preface is attached to the present edition of the *Yinwenzi*,[389] in which a man of Shanyang 山陽, whose family name was Zhongchang 仲長, states that at the end of Cao Pi 曹丕's (187–226 AD) Huangchu 黃初 era (220–226 AD) he went to the capital and Miao Xibo 繆熙伯 gave him this text. Mr. Zhongchang liked it a lot and "corrected many errors" (*duo tuo wu* 多脫誤) dividing the text into two chapters (named "Dadao shang" 大道上 and "Dadao xia" 大道下). Xibo is the courtesy name of Miao Xi 繆襲 (186–245 AD), a prominent scholar of the time.[390] Miao Xi was a close friend of Zhongchang Tong 仲長統 (180–220 AD), another

[384] *HS* 30. 1736.
[385] The *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 records an anecdote in which Yin Wen is talking with King Min 愍of Qi (r. 301-284 BC); *LSCQ* 4/8. 538-539.
[386] *SS* 34. 1104.
[387] Gao Liushui and Lin Hengsen, 1996, p. 85.
[388] Bai Xi states that the *Song Yin pai* 宋尹派 does not exist, and regards Song Xing as a thinker near to mohist positions, and Yin Wen near to those of Huang Lao; Bai Xi, 1992, p. 85; Chen Guying agrees with Bai Xi on Yin Wen, and says that Song Xing combined mohist with daoist instances; Chen Guying, 2007, p. 11. Most of the researchers state that Huang-Lao thought developed in Qi, which was also the centre of the activities of Jixia Academy; Chen Guying 2007, p. 10, n. 1.
[389] The preface is published in the Taiwanese Wang Kailuan's edition (*YWZ*, p. 12, it is only one page), but is not featured in the Gao Liushui and Ling Hensen's edition.
[390] *SGZ* 21. 620.

man of scholarly and literary ability, so that the Mr. Zhongchang of the *Yinwenzi*'s preface in the past has been identified with Zhongchang Tong.[391] Nevertheless, Zhongchang Tong died in 220 so it was not possible for him to be in the capital at the end of the Huangchu era. Therefore, Mr. Zhongchang could be a member of Zhongchang Tong's family. If so, it would be possible for him to know Miao Xi.[392] The content of the preface aroused several doubts regarding the origin of the text. Even if Yin Wen was acknowledged as being a man of Warring States time, the authenticity of the *Yinwenzi*, which supposedly contains his teachings, has been questioned. Tang Ge 唐鉞 and Luo Genze 羅根澤 stated[393] that it was probably a forgery of late Han-Wei period, and their statements greatly influenced the subsequent scholarship, so much so that the studies on the *Yinwenzi* were neglected for many years.[394] Today scholars, however, agree in considering the text an original product of Warring States period. Comparing its content with those of *Zhuangzi*'s "Tianxia" 天下 chapter (which contains a dialogue between Song Xing and Yin Wen) and other textual materials linked to Jixia masters, renders it possible to find a coherent system of ideas, which show affiliation with the cultural debate at the time of the Jixia Academy.[395] In particular, to define *ming* was a topic which involved most of the thinkers of Warring States period; from Confucius and Mengzi (and also with Xunzi, whose text contains the "Zhengming" 正名 chapter)[396] to Mohists and Gongsun Long, the scholars were exposing different positions about this issue, which was a topic also discussed by the masters of the Jixia Academy.[397] The *Yinwenzi* is the first work which gives a comprehensive understanding of the concept of *ming* 名

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[391] This was the idea of Chao Gongwu 晁公武 (1105-1180) expressed in his *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志; see Dong Yingzhe, 1997, p. 94; Gao Liushui and Lin Hengsen, 1997, p. 88.

[392] Dong Yingzhe, 1997, p. 94. Gao Liushui seems to believe that who wrote the preface signed it as Mr. Zhongchang using the fame of Zhongchang Tong's name to promote the text, Gao and Lin, 1997, p. 88.

[393] Tang Gen 1982, p. 223, 236, 240; Luo Genze, 1982, pp. 249, 255, Dong Yingzhe confutes Luo's statements, see Dong Yingzhe, 1997, pp. 95-96.

[394] Liu Jiangguo, in his *Xian Qin weishu bianzheng* 先秦僞書辨正, demolishes point after point Tang Ge and Luo Genze's thesis; see Liu Jiangguo, 2004, pp. 301-309.

[395] Dong Yingzhe, 1997, p. 97; Cai Xianjin and Wang Yuquan, 2007, p. 100. Wang Xiaobo in his article analyses in detail *Yinwenzi*'s understanding of daoist concepts, see Wang Xiaobo, 2005, pp. 15-22. Liu Jianguo, 2004, p. 309.

[396] On how Xunzi's thought had been influenced by the debate of Jixia masters see Sato, 2003, pp. 210-232.

[397] Liu Xiang, once in charge of systematizing the textual material preserved at his time, grouped the thinkers, who have *ming* as the main issue of their debates, in the same category called "mingjia" 名家 of which the most representative figure is Gongsun Long who, according to Liu Jianguo (2004, p. 311), had been greatly influenced by Yin Wen's thought; *HS* 30. 1736-1737.

(name, to name), defining in detail its role in relation with *xing* 形 (form),[398] and then to *fa* 法 (law), to in the end formulate a way of governance (*zhi* 治).[399] According to the *Yinwenzi*, *ming* and *xing* must correspond, because not doing so will create confusion in language communication. This then will confuse the way of thinking so that the government will also be affected.[400] The *Yinwenzi* then stresses that names must be discussed (*bian* 辨); by discussing the name and correcting them, it is possible to distinguish the difference between things, and moreover it is possible to examine if a name corresponds to his true object or not.[401] If names and forms do not correspond, it could appear a non-correspondence between names and reality.[402] *Yinwenzi*'s content is discussed here at length because the anecdote is functional to the text's philosophical disquisition, so that to understand its meaning, it is necessary to look at his position inside the whole text's argumentation. The story of the man of Chu appears as an exemplum to describe the phenomenon in which the deviation from the trustful relation between names and reality leads to strange consequences: the man of Chu was holding in his hand a pheasant. However, he said that it was a phoenix, and with the "phoenix"-name cheated the man who was passing by, to steal his money. The people of the reign spread the story of a man who bought a "phoenix" for the king, and when the King of Chu heard it accordingly he rewarded the man as if what he had bought was a real and precious gift.[403] Hence, the man of

[398] It says: "Names rectify forms. Forms are rectified by names, then the names can not be wrong. This is the reason why Zhongni (Confucius) said: 'It is necessary to rectify the name!'" 名也者，正形者也。形正由名，則名不可差。故仲尼云："必也正名乎！" *YWZ* 1.1.

[399] See Liu Jianguo, 2004, pp. 310-311. In the *Yinwenzi* a philosophical thinking based on the concept of *ming* is articulated but its aim is to give through this an instrument by which to govern a state; its teachings then have a pragmatic use, similarly to all the theories expressed by the members of Jixia Academy.

[400] "Names give names to forms; forms adapt to names, so if forms do not correspond to the proper names, names do not correspond with the proper forms, so the pair forms and their names easily are separated; if [names and forms] are not able to correspond, disorder [emerges]" 名者，名形者也；形者，應名者也，然形非正名，名非正形也，則形之與名，居然別矣；不可相亂。*YWZ* 1. 3.

[401] 名不可不辨, *YWZ* 1. 4.

[402] As far as the problem of reality is concerned, Keightley agrees with Thomas Metzger ("*Some Ancient Roots* of Modern *Chinese* Thought," in *Early China*, No. 11-12, 1985-86, pp. 61-117) on deifying Chinese epistemology as "optimistic" because "problems of knowledge, problems involving appearance and reality, were frequently treated as involving the general acceptability of the names that could be applied to reality, rather that the nature of the reality itself"; Keightley, 2002, p. 135. Ancient Chinese thinkers did not make an issue of the nature of reality, which optimists assumed as knowable.

[403] The motif of the persuasive power of many people recalls an anecdote contained in the *Hanfeizi* in the "Neichu shuishang" 內儲說上, which says: "When Pang Gong together with the Crown Prince was going to Handan as a hostage, he said to the King of Wei: 'Now, if someone says that in the market-place there is a tiger, will Your Majesty believe it?' 'No, I will not believe it,' replied the King. 'Then, if two men say that in the marketplace there is a tiger, will Your Majesty believe it?'

Chu forged a lie by giving to a pheasant the *name* of "phoenix," the passer-by believed it, the people of the state spread the lie (that is the false correspondence between name and form), and the king, once he heard about it, confirmed it by rewarding the passer by (which means confirming a false relationship between name and its corresponding form).[404] The story in the *Yinwenzi* can be defined as being a *yuyan* 寓言 (metaphor, exemplum) which is, according to *Zhuangzi*, "borrowing externals to discuss something,"[405] i.e. to use a story arguing an idea. The use of small fictional narratives as a tool to convey opinion, teaching, or to give advice was a common feature in Chinese traditional literature since Warring States period. Works such as the *Hanfeizi*, the *Mengzi*, the *Zhuangzi*, to Han times *Hanshi waizhuan* to *Shuiyuan*, valued fables and historical anecdotes not for their appeal to the reader as a piece of narrative or for the historical truths they contained but for the arguments they would substantiate.[406] Accordingly, even if they could have had in origin an oral form about whose aim and use one can only speculate,[407] once they were written down, they were shaped and arranged by the arguments supported by the texts.

2. 1. 7. From the *Yinwenzi* to the *Xiaolin*.

The anecdote about the man of Chu of the *Yinwenzi* in the *Taiping guanji* is ascribed to the *Xiaolin*. As a story isolated from its context, it was previously recorded in the

'No, I will not believe it,' he replied. 'If three men say that in the market-place there is a tiger, will Your Majesty believe it?' The King said: 'I will believe it,'" *HFZ* 5A. 452.

[404] See Cai Xianjin and Wang Yuquan, 2007, p. 101.

[405] *ZZ* 27. 948; trans. Mair, 1993, p. 278. *Yuyan* is another *Zhuangzi*'s device to argue an idea without expressing a direct statement. The *yuyan* work better because they leave to the reader the interpretation of what they express, without affirming something. On the problem of language in the *Zhuangzi* see Chapter 1. 1. 3.

[406] On the role of anecdotes in historical works see Schaberg 2001, pp. 189-190.

[407] As far as historical anecdotes are concerned, several scholars have stressed the importance of orally transmitted sayings and anecdotes in the formation of early Chinese historical writings and they suppose a performative context in which historical knowledge was used as a rhetorical tool adapted to the purpose of court deliberation; see Schaberg 2001, pp. 315-324. Regarding the fables instead, their origin is normally attributed to the folk (*minjian* 民間) who invented and transmitted oral tales primarily about natural deities or stories contained in the folksongs; see Wang Huanbao, 1965, pp. 1-11. Nevertheless, it is impossible to draw such a categorical panorama. Fables are part of an orality whose boundaries are not easily marked.

Yiwen leiju 藝文類聚, a collectanea completed by Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641 AD) during the Tang dynasty. The story is preserved in the "Niao" 鳥 (bird) section, under "Zhi" 雉 (pheasant) entry, but here is ascribed to the *Yinwenzi*. It appears again in the third part of "Yuzu" 羽族 (feathered animal) section of the *Taiping yulan*, which with the *Taiping guangji* previously mentioned, is one of the so called four great books of Song (*song si da shu* 宋四大書); here thus is again ascribed to the *Yinwenzi*.

This situation of different textual attributions generates questions, which can enable one to understand what, in the end, was the content of the *Xiaolin*, and how it was regarded by literary history. The fact that the story appears into two collectanea as ascribed to the *Yinwenzi* and only in one collectanea as ascribed to the *Xiaolin*, could arouse a suspect of wrong attribution, in particular because the *Yiwen leiju* is the earlier work and features the *Yinwenzi* as its source. Was the *Taiping guangji* wrong to indicate as the source of its story Handan Chun's text?[408] Nevertheless, both the compilations of *Taiping yulan* and the *Taiping guanji*, were composed under the supervision of the same scholar, Li Fang; so how was it possible to make such a mistake? Furthermore, if it was not a mistake why was the same story ascribed to two different sources? To answer these questions it is necessary to define then which kind of collectanea were the *Taiping yulan* and the *Taiping guangji*.

Tan Kai 談愷 (1503–1568), a Ming dynasty scholar, in the preface of his *Taiping guangji*'s wood block edition,[409] explains that the *Taiping guangji* was compiled collecting material from unofficial histories (*yeshi* 野史), transmitted records (*zhuanji* 傳記) and lesser sayings (*xiaoshuo* 小說) of all the traditions, in contrast to the *Taiping yulan* which collected passages from officially categorized

[408] Sometimes different editions of the *Taiping guangji* present errors in recording the source of the passages; this is the case of the "Linfu" 鄰夫 (the neighbour), a story recorded in the *juan* 251. During Ming dynasty, Tan Kai 談愷's wood block printing edition ascribed it to the *Xiaoyan* 笑言, Shen Yuwen 沈與文's edition to the *Xiaolin* (see *TPGJ* 251. 1952). *Xiaoyan* as a text appears only in Tan Kai's edition, it is probably his error. Neither Ma Guohan nor Lu Xun, collecting the *Xiaolin*'s items, ever mentioned this passage because they were using Tan Kai's edition, however the story probably is borrowed from a Tang Dynasty *Xiaolin* (see Zhao Weiguo, 2002, p. 21); anyway, it is probably an error of misreading, as the titles are very similar. I do not consider these kinds of errors in my discussion as they differ from errors of wrong attribution; *Yinwenzi* and *Xiaolin*, as names, can not be confused in the same way.

[409] Tan Ke's preface is contained in Ding Xigen's book *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo xuba ji* 中國歷代小說序跋集; see Ding Xigen, 1996, p. 1770.

texts (*jing shi zi ji* 經史子集).[410] He, moreover, says that because he retired from official appointments he had a lot of spare time, so he decided to edit this text, which assembled "the unofficial stories of the *baiguan*" (*baiguan yeshi* 稗官野史), not only because "it is possible to look at them" (*xiaodao keguan* 小道可觀) but also because those stories are as pleasant as playing *liu* and *bo* games.[411] It is evident here that Tan Kai is quoting the *Hanshu*'s definition of the "Xiaoshuo" category, which from his first appearance onwards, has been used as a definition for all non officially regarded kinds of texts. The *Hanshu* records that the *baiguan* were the officials supposedly in charge of collecting the *xiaoshuo*, and these texts were recorded because, even if shallow and superficial, they could contain some rustic knowledge worthy to look at;[412] but Tan Kai specifies that this is not the only reason why he was interested in the topic. These texts also had the quality to be entertaining like social games; this appears to be the main reason that induced him to undertake his task.[413]

In Qing times then the *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目 places the *Taiping yulan* with the *Yiwen leiju* under the "Leishu lei" 類書類 category, and the *Taiping guangji* instead under the "Xiaoshuo jia lei" 小説家類. So the *Yiwen leiju* and the *Taiping yulan* were considered encyclopedias (*leishu*) which must serve as a source of general knowledge for the literate population of the time. Their internal divisions reflect this understanding, as there are sections about food (*YWLJ* 72, *TPYL* 843-867), rituals (*YWLJ* 38-40, *TPGJ* 522-562), official charges (*YWLJ* 45-50, *TPGJ*

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[410] The division of the texts in four categories is already present in the *Suishu*'s bibliographical chapter: *jing* 經section contains primarily *ru* works, *shi* 史 section historical and geographical texts, *zi* 子the works of the masters of thought and *ji* 集 contains poetry and various other collections of items as Buddhist and daoist works.

[411]餘歸田多暇，稗官野史，手抄目覽。匪曰小道可觀，蓋欲賢於博奕云爾; *TPGJ* p. 2 and in Ding Xige, 1996, p. 1770. Already in the Chapter 1, I have mentioned that Emperor Xian of Han defended himself from the accusation of holding in too high esteem *fu*-writers saying that *fu* poetry "is far better (*xian* 賢) than the antics of entertainers and jesters or games such as *liubo* (*bo* 博) and encirclement chess (*yi* 弈)" 賢於倡優博弈遠矣; *HS* 64. 2829 trans. Knetchges, 2010, p. 15. His words are an echo and reformulation of a passage from the *Lunyu*, which says: "[…]Do we not have the games Bo and Yi? Even playing these games would be better than doing nothing;" 不有博弈者乎，為之猶賢乎已, *LY* 17/22. 189, trans. Slingerland, 2003, p. 210. Confucius' words are frequently used to justify the interest in entertaining practices. In the case of Tan Kai's preface, in the last phrase *xian yu bo yi yun er* 賢於博奕云爾, *yi* 奕 is the miswritten character for *yi* 弈, "encirclement chess."

[412] *HS* 30. 1745.

[413] The wood block edition prepared by Tan Kai reintroduces into wide circulation pre-Tang and Tang tales which were not commonly available and awaked the literati's interest in such a kind of narrative leading to compilations of new kind of works which have as their source the *Taiping guanji* itself. Feng Menglong compilation of jokes, among others, is such a kind of texts.

203-269) etc.[414] The *Taiping guanji* instead was a collection of stories the main purpose of which was not to instruct about a topic but to entertain the reader; accordingly, it is divided into chapters based on the main topic of the recorded passages (tales), which in turn this time are identified by a title. To give a title to a collected passage shows that this one is not regarded as a simple excerpt of knowledge about a topic. The title frames the passage as a single piece of narrative. Returning to the question about why the same story, in the two Taiping collectanea, is ascribed with two different sources, the problem is quickly resolved: The *Taiping yulan*, being a text which incorporates textual material from works that have an official recognition, records the story citing its *Yinwenzi* source, a text credited to a master of thought (*zi*). The *Taiping guanji* instead, being a collection of stories, records the tale about the pheasant citing its *Xiaolin*'s source, a text ascribed to the "Xiaoshuo" category[415] and still available at the time;[416] moreover, it gives to the tale the title: "Chu zhi" 楚雉 (The pheasant of Chu).[417]

The explanations thus far serve to have a hint on another crucial point: which kind of stories were collected under the *Xiaolin* title? According to what we have shown, the story about the man of Chu contained in the *Xiaolin* is identical with the one embedded in the *Yinwenzi*. In addition it is known from the preface written by Mr. Zhongchang that the *Yinwenzi* was circulating among members of the educated elite in a period in which Handan Chun, the *Xiaolin*'s author, could be still alive.[418] It is also known that Mr. Zhongchang decided to work on the text because he liked it. Actually, the verb he used to express his reaction to the reading of the text is *wan* 玩; he said he "greatly enjoyed it" (*shen wan zhi* 甚玩之). I am inclined to think that he

[414] In the preface of the Qing edition then, Huang Sheng 黃晟 defines the *Taiping yulan* in this same way; about the *Taiping guanji* he states that the text collects material from texts such as unofficial histories and *baiguan* records (*yeshi baiguan zhilei* 野史稗官之類); Ding Xigen, 1996, p. 1771.
[415] *SS* 34. 1011.
[416] Even if today the original text is lost, during Song times it was still available. Wu Zeng 吳曾 (around 1162) cited it in his *Nengzhi zhai man lu* 能致斎漫录 as being composed of ten *juan* (instead of the three recorded in the *Suishu*), p. 184. So not only the *Xiaolin* was still circulating, but it had also been amplified.
[417] It is important to specify that The *Hanshu* states that: "Among the ten schools of thought listed in the bibliographical chapter, only nine contain something worth to be read" 諸子十家, 其可觀者九家而已, *HS* 30. 1746; The "xiaoshuo" category is the one which is left apart (while the "mingjia," to which *Yinwenzi* belongs, is considered relevant).
[418] Lu Kanru is the only researcher who gives the date of Handan Chun death in 221, just at the beginning of Huangchu era; Lu Kanru, 1985, p. 202; nevertheless, other researchers state that Handan Chun was probably alive even at the end of Huangchu era (see Xu Kechao, 2006, p. 63). Was he alive or not after 221 is not crucial for the discussion of this paragraph.

enjoyed it not only as a philosophical work but mainly as a work containing stories. Then it is possible that from the *Yinwenzi*, which was available at the time, Handan Chun extracted a story which he regarded as "enjoyable" and collected it with others in his new text. Then it has been illustrated that the morphology of *Xiaolin*'s story in no way differs from that of the *Yinwenzi*; what differs is that placing it in a different context, its reading-paradigm changes, and how did the reader know which was the new reading-paradigm? From the title of the new text.

The title chosen by Handan Chun is composed of two characters: *xiao* 笑 and *lin* 林. The character *lin* recalls a previous legacy of texts, which were famous for embedding tales and anecdotes. First of all was the "Shuilin" 說林 chapter of the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, which in turn was one of the models for Liu Xiang's *Shuiyuan*.[419] The *Shiji suoyin*, commenting on the "Shuilin," says: "The numerous persuasions and all the stories are as many as [the trees in] a forest."[420] The *lin* of our text has the same meaning, it suggests a multitude of something; to understand this the first character should be studied. The *Shuowen jiezi* explains *xiao* 笑 as *xi* 喜 or "to be pleased;"[421] hence *xiao* could be understood as something "funny" defined as "pleasant so as to have a tendency to cause a smile."[422] To resume the title informs the reader that the content of the text is, presumably, made by numerous funny stories, the aim of which is to please the audience (not to teach or to advise on government issues). The title creates in the reader the ideal mental set which provides a "horizon" of expectations toward the text and the stories which it contains. Thus a story, which morphologically was identical to those found in anecdotal collections voted to a philosophical or political agenda, here is proposed only for itself. According to what can be deduced from the story taken as an example then, what is new is not the narrative strategy adopted by the author to create a funny tale for his readers, but that this story shifted its reading paradigm from a didactic-moralizing one to an entertaining one.

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[419] Yang Yi, 1998, p. 4, 139. More over, the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (2nd century BC) also contains a chapter called "Shuilin xun" 說林訓 *juan* 17; the *yuan* 苑of *Shuiyuan* suggests the same concept of "a variety of items;" see Yang Yi, 1998, pp. 139-140.
[420] *SJ* 63. 2148, n. 7.
[421] *SWJZ* p. 198.
[422] This definition is given by Thesaurus Linguae sericae at the *xiao* entry (with "funny" meaning) http://tls.uni-hd.de/home_en.lasso.

Therefore, as far as the story about the man of Chu and the pheasant is concerned, once collected in the *Xiaolin*, it can be read as having as the main protagonists, a cunning man and a numskull. The numskull not only believes in the existence of the phoenix (which could be understood as having a blind faith in something fantastic that does not exist), but furthermore he is not able to distinguish a common pheasant from a supernatural bird. It could be observed that actually in this case there is the presence of two numskulls: the passer-by is the first, the king is the second. The lord of a state, seen in the previous texts (*Hanshi waizhuan, Shuiyuan, Lu Lianzi*) as a character who bestows proper recompense to worthy acts, here is just another stupid person who believes in the existence of the phoenix and, moreover, generously rewards a man who just bought a pheasant; (in the *Shiji*'s stories the King is cheated, but he shows his good faith toward the envoy; in the *Yinwenzi*'s story, even if he legitimates a "false" name, he again shows his good faith toward the passer-by; the intellectual quality of the king-character is never an issue).

2. 2. The *Xiaolin*, a collection of funny stories.

The fact that the story ascribed to the *Xiaolin* is identical to that contained in the *Yinwenzi* poses another question on which we have to reflect. Could the *Xiaolin*'s stories be defined as jokes?[423] A detailed account will not be given here of the numerous definitions provided by linguistic scholars who research humour, as there

[423] Karin Myhre, who provides the "Wit and Humour" section in Mair's *History of Chinese Literature*, gives an unsatisfactory account on "humorous" Chinese literature. Arranging together different kinds of texts in a quite confusing way, she also states: "early on the Chinese language already had a fine supply of words for joke, jest, jape, satire, wordplay, and to other humour-filled types of language and behaviour," but after, she grouped them all together without clearly specifying each term; she then regards the *Xiaolin* as a book of jokes but she does not define it and discusses only the content of Feng Menglong's collection because two texts contained the same material; see Myhre, 2001, pp. 134-136. She then talks about jokes in early works of philosophy and history, citing stories from *Mengzi* to *Hanfeizi* on foolish persons or strange behaviours (ibid., p. 138) - but were they jokes? Were they understood as "jokes" by their readers and authors or were regarded as something else? I feel that to define them as "jokes" is quite anachronistic. We could agree on the fact that some stories that were preserved in the works of the masters could be funny, but we cannot define them as being part of a "humorous" genre of texts. Her discussion would be acceptable if she had to highlight the humorous features in some kind of narrative genre, but since her article is featured in a *History of Chinese Literature* it could give the wrong assumption that she is discussing a well defined category of texts.

are many theories and discussions about the topic;[424] however, we could give a simple and general definition of it as: a brief narrative constructed to cause laughter in the reader/listener and driven by a final surprise expressed in the punch-line.[425] This means that a joke must be recognizable by its narrative strategy (linguistic structure or style for presenting the joke) and the language it employs; so as to say that it has to show a certain grade of awareness in the composition of the narrative to obtain the effect which it aims (the humorous effect).[426] Except for the case previously analysed, which clearly can not be defined as a narrative built to obtain a humorous effect (as it is borrowed from another text),[427] the other stories appear to be quite heterogeneous in their topics and forms. Some anecdotes have as protagonists historical or quasi historical members of the educated elite,[428] whose characters are typified to show a trait of their personalities. Their narratives resemble very closely the anecdotes contained in the *Shishuo xinyu*, and it is not possible to identify a particular structural strategy which differentiates them from Liu Yiqing's anecdotes. See, for example, the following cases:

> 沈珩弟峻，字叔山，有名譽，而性儉吝。張溫使蜀，與峻別，峻入內良久，出語溫曰："向擇一端布，欲以送卿，而無麤者。"溫嘉其能顯非。
>
> The younger brother of Shen Heng,[429] Jun, with the courtesy name of Shushan, was a man of fame and prestige but by nature was frugal and stingy. When Zhang Wen was about to go for a diplomatic mission to Shu (224), he [went to visit Jun] to bid farewell to him. Jun disappeared inside [his house] for a long

[424] One definition is given according to the Semantic Script-based Theory of Humour (SSTH), formulated by Salvatore Attardo and Ruskin (see the chapter "Beyond the joke" in Salvatore Attardo, 2001, *Humorous texts: a semantic and pragmatic analysis*, Berlin, New York, Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 61-78); the General Theory of Verbal Humour takes some notions from the SSTH defining six different knowledge(cognitive?) resources needed to define a joke. See Graeme D. Ritchie's critique of these theories in Ritchie, 2004, pp. 69-80.

[425] "The joke-text is a genre, having properties which distinguish it from other texts and which, regardless of the perlocutionary effects it may bring about, determine its comic illocutionary nature;" Ermida, 2008, p. 110. The punch-line is "a technical strategy that aims at causing a sudden 'comprehension change,'" Ermida, 2008, p. 152.

[426] See Ritchie, 2004, pp. 175-185. Ermida, 2008, pp. 97-99.

[427] Of course I do not know if the *Yinwenzi* itself is borrowing from other textual material, and how it adapted the story, if it is the case. I can drive assumption only analyzing the texts preserved. What is certain, it is that Handan Chun did not compose that story to make his reader laugh, he collected it from another text.

[428] Like Shen Jun 沈峻 and Zhang Wen 張溫, story n. 11, or Zhao Boweng 趙伯翁, story n. 8. Chapter 4. 3.

[429] Shen Heng, courtesy name Zhongshan 仲山, was a man of Wu 吳 that served under Wendi of Wei 魏文帝's reign (220-226) as an officer and was enfeoffed as "Marquis of the prefecture of Yongan" 永安鄉侯. See *Sanguozhi* 三國志, *juan* 47.

time, when he came out he said to Wen: "I wanted to pick out a piece of cloth to give to you but there was no rough one left." [Zhang] Wen praised his capacity of not hiding anything.[430]

和嶠性至儉，家有好李，王武子求之，與不過數十。王武子因其上直，率將少年能食之者，持斧詣園，飽共噉畢，伐之，送一車枝與和公。問曰："何如君李？"和既得，唯笑而已。

He Qiao was by nature extremely stingy. In his household there were some excellent plums, but when his brother-in-law, Wang Wuzi,[431] asked for some, he gave him no more than thirty or forty. Wang Wuzi, taking advantage of He's being on night duty at the palace, led some young men who could eat them, who went, axes in hand, into the orchard. After they had all eaten their fill, they chopped down the trees and sent a cartload of branches to He with the question, "Sir, how do these compare with plums?" After He received their message he merely laughed and nothing more.[432]

The two stories, the first ascribed to the *Xiaolin*,[433] the second to the *Shishuo xinyu*, both involve real members of the educated elite of Wei Jin times: Shen Jun[434] and Zhang Wen (192–? AD) in the first;[435] He Qiao (?–292 AD) and Wang Ji in the second. At the beginning of *Xiaolin*'s story, Shen Jun is defined as frugal and stingy. This last feature then is elaborated through the narration of a specific event of the character's life so as to make the stinginess appear to be his iconic trait. His stingy behaviour is judged by Zhang Wen, who, in opposition to what one could expect, praises his friend's "incapacity of not hiding anything." This closure reveals the typical Wei-Jin spirit, which admires the personality who remains true to its self even

[430] *YWLJ* 85. 1463 (also in: *TPYL* 820. 3651, *XTZ* 4. 84). This story is found also in the *Yinyun xiaoshuo*殷芸小说, 6. 125.
[431] Wuzi was the courtesy name of Wang Ji 王濟.
[432] Mather, 1976, p. 455.
[433] Ning Jiayu questions the attribution of this story to Handan Chun's *Xiaolin*, stating that at the time Zhang Wen went to Shu, Handan was already dead; Ning Jiayu, 1991, p. 13. Xu Kechao instead states that he could be alive, so this story is not a later addition; Xu Kechao, 2006, p. 62. See Chapter 3. 4.
[434] Sheng Jun, courtesy name Shigao 士高 was a man of Wukang 武康in Wuxing prefecture 吳興 (today city Deqing 德清, Zhejiang). His name is recorded in the "Rulin zhuan" 儒林傳 (Biographies of scholars) of the Liangshu 梁書.
[435] Zhang Wen, courtesy name Huishu 惠恕, was a man of the prefecture of Wu. He served as *dachen* 大臣under the reign of the Western Wu (220-280). See *Sanguozhi* 三國志, *juan* 57.

in showing behaviours that would be defined as weakness.[436] The *Shishuo xinyu*, a work that embodies the Wei-Jin spirit, has a defined category for this particular trait, the twenty-ninth chapter "Jian Se" 儉嗇 (Stinginess and meanness),[437] in which is placed the anecdote about He Qiao. Both the stories draw attention to the *xing* 性 (temperament, disposition) of the characters they describe, and they focus on their stinginess as a part of their human uncontrolled nature, with the sensibility typical of Wei-Jin anecdotes about personalities.[438] In other *Xiaolin*'s stories the protagonists are generic characters who are nameless ("A" *jia* 甲 and "B" *yi* 乙)[439] or are conventionally addressed by the name of their homeland ("a man of Qi" 齊人, "a man of Chu" 楚人, or "a man of Wu" 吳人),[440] a common feature found in several former *yuyan*, which as previously said are "small fictional narratives used as a tool to convey opinion, teaching, or to give advice." As far as *yuyan* stories are concerned, it is undoubted that extracted from their textual contexts some of them appear to be similar to numskull tales found among many literary traditions.[441] With regard to the morphology of their narratives, they do not present big differences from

[436] The *Shishuo xinyu*, about which we are going to talk hereafter in the text, records categories which exhibit "intrinsic characteristics irrepressible by one's will" and "the Shishuo author never passes moral judgment on behaviour that would later be considered 'vicious and petty.' Instead, we find that it is often ascribed simply to *xing* (nature)." With the other categories they "underscore the function of one's subjectivity: […] to defer to one's natural impulses." See Qian Nanxiu, 2001, p. 135.

[437] Qian Nanxiu says that this is a reconceptualization of a pre-Wei-Jin category; Qian Nanxiu, 2001, pp. 124-125.

[438] Wang Rong 王戎 (234-305), one of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, was very famous for his stinginess, see Qian Nanxiu 2001, pp. 148-149. His stingy behaviour is the subject of many anecdotes collected in the *Shishuo xinyu*, see *SSXY* 29/2. 873, 29/3. 873; 29/4. 874; 29/5. 874.

[439] Appendix A, Stories No. 22 and No. 7.

[440] Appendix A, Stories No. 2, No. 4, No. 15.

[441] The only collection of jokes of ancient Greek, the *Philogelos* or "Laughter-Lover" (dated around 4th–5ft century AD, according to Andreassi, 2004, p. 33), contains several stories about the "numskull" who, in this particular collection, is personified by the "skolastikos" (or egghead); but in some stories the figure of the stupid is stereotyped with his geographical provenience, as the people of Abdera (jokes n. 110-127), people of Sidon (n. 128-139) and people of Cumae (n. 154-182), in what today studies on humour call "ethnic humour." About the topic of "ethnic humour" see Berger, 1998, pp. 65-74 (Salvatore Attardo is even more specific differentiating between a "real" ethnic humour, which employs specifically ethnic script for the script opposition, and a "false" ethnic humour, which is built around a script opposition that could be applied to any group and is then applied to a specific ethnic group; Attardo, 1994, p. 219). The translation of the *Philogelos* is available in English by B. Baldwin, 1983, *The philogelos or Laugther-Lover*, Amsterdam, J. C. Gieben. As far as Chinese literature is concerned, the stories embedded in the works of the masters sometimes have as protagonists stupid men identified by their provenience too: in the *Hanfeizi* there is a prevalence of stories about the man of Zheng 鄭, of Wei偉 and in particular of Song 宋. The stupid man of Song is also found in the *Zhuangzi* or in the *Mengzi*; on this topic see Zhang Chongchen 張崇琛, 2008, "'Songren' xianxiang yu zhongguo chuantong wenhua zhong de diyu bianjian" "宋人"現象與中國傳統文化中的地域偏見, in *Kexue Jingji Shehui*, Vol. 26, No. 112, pp. 34-37.

the stories of the *Xiaolin*. As an example, see the following two famous stories, one contained in the "Gongsun Chou shang" 公孫丑上 chapter of the *Mengzi* 孟子, the other in the *Xiaolin*:[442]

> 宋人有閔其苗之不長而揠之者，芒芒然歸。謂其人曰："今日病矣，予助苗長矣。"其子趨而往視之，苗則槁矣。
>
> There was a man of Song who was worrying that his seedlings were not growing, so he pulled at them; he did it hastily[443] and went back home. [Then] he said to his family members: "Today I'm very tired, I helped the seedlings to grow." His son quickly went out to see [what he had done], the sprouts were already withered. [444]

> 魯有執長竿入城門者，初竪執之，不可入，橫執之，亦不可入，計無所出。俄有老父至，曰："吾非聖人，但見事多矣。何不以鋸中截而入。"遂依而截之。
>
> At Lu there was a man who holding a long bamboo pole [tried] to enter the city's gate; at the beginning he held it vertically, but was unable to enter; he held it horizontally, and again he was not able to enter, and did not know how to come out from it. In a moment (the next moment, suddenly) arrived an old gentleman, and said: "I am not a wise man but I saw many things. Why don't you saw it in the middle to enter." So according [to the old man's words] he cut it. [in two].[445]

Both stories have as their main characters two men who are generically identified by the name of their homeland, "a man of Song" and "a man of Lu." Both protagonists are faced with a practical problem, to make the plants grow and to get through the city gate with a long bamboo pole. Both made up a nonsense solution for their problems, pulling the sprouts out to help them grow and sawing the pole in two parts to get through the door. They are also classified under the same category

[442] Appendix A, Story No. 1.
[443] *Mang* 芒 means *ju* 遽, it means that he did his work so fast that he felt tired.
[444] *MZ* 3. 232.
[445] *TPGJ* 262. 2053.

of tale type, the "stories about the numskull" (*benren de gushi* 笨人的故事, 1200-1349).[446]

Several researches trace the similarities between different kinds of texts (those classified as *zi* and *shi* with those classified as *xiaoshuo*), and generally highlight how many humorous features were to be found in early literature,[447] or what degree of fictionalization do works defined as philosophical or historical have.[448] Nevertheless, this research wishes to investigate the meaning of a text in its own time, so, even if one can hypothesize that some *yuyan* show a form of humorous sensibility how much awareness do they show in their compositions? In other words, does showing a sense of humour make a text "humorous" or is it the general structure and aim that defines a text?

The *yuyan* were small narratives composed to convey philosophical or moral teachings. In the absence of other information about their use one can not safely state that they were perceived in a way that differs from the aim of the text in which they were locked. As far as the *Xiaolin* is concerned, it could be brought in to question if the author was consciously composing something which had a defined genre, the humorous genre. However, I think that in part a hint for the answer has already been given in the first part of this section, but to pose such a kind of question is important in relation to how today Chinese literary history classifies the *Xiaolin*.

Ning Jiayu in his *Zhongguo zhiren xiaoshuo shi* 中國志人小說史, following Lu Xun,[449] classifies the *Xiaolin* in the same category of the *Shishuo xinyu* as

[446] Ding Naitong follows the AT classification; see Ding Naitong, 1986, pp. 333-355. They are identified also individually, the first corresponds to number 1241B (Ding Naitong, 1986, p. 336); the second to number 1246A (Ding Naitong, 1986, p. 337). The corresponding Aarne-Thompson classification could be also AT J2060, which corresponds to "absurd plan."

[447] This is the main concern of Cristopher Harbsmeier's 1989, "Humor in Ancient Chinese Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 289-310; and 1990, "Confucius Ridens: Humor in the Analects" in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studie*s, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 131–162; Alvin P. Cohen, 1976, "Humorous Anecdotes in Chinese Historical Texts," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 96, No. 1, pp. 121- 124.

[448] Kenneth De Woskin, 1983, "On Narrative Revolutions," in *Chinese literature: Essay, Articles, Reviews*, 1-2: 5, pp. 29-45; W.H. Jr. Nienhauser, 1988-89, "The Origin of Chinese Fiction" in *Monumenta Serica*, 38, pp. 1-14. This process is also at the core of early works of Chinese literary history as Hu huaichen 胡懷琛's *Zhongguo xiaoshuo gailun* 中國小說概論. In the same way Wu Zhida 吳志達, in his *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo shi* 中國文言小說史, tries to highlight *xiaoshuo* features in pre-Qin/early Han texts (in particular pp. 21-48).

[449] Lu Xun created the label *zhiren* 志人 or "record on personalities" to indicate a collection of anecdotes of historical personalities in opposition to *zhiguai* 志怪 collection, whose contents were

Weidai zhiren xiaoshuo 魏代志人小説 (record of personalities of Wei times), saying that it was the first *zhiren xiaoshuo* that appeared, compiled by Handan Chun when he was old.[450] Hou Zhongyi instead, in his *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo shigao* 中國文言小說史稿 explicitly defines it as "a collection of jokes" (*xiaohua ji* 笑話集), identifying it in a category that differentiates the *Xiaolin* from the *Shishuo xinyu*.[451] However, he curiously gives the definition of jokes (*xiaohua*) as: "A story which talks about absurd behaviours and matters, which go against logical thinking, but in which is possible to find a teaching or a stimulus,"[452] so as to say that every joke is a fictional story which has a teaching inside to discover, like the *yuyuan.*[453] Moreover, he describes the protagonists of the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan" and Dongfang Shuo as masters of jokes.[454] Chen Wenxin agrees with Hou Zhongyi in considering the *Xiaolin* in a separate category, which names after it, the "Xiaolin ti" 笑林体.[455]

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most about ghosts, immortals or daoist techniques. See Lu Xun, 2005c, "Zhongguo xiaoshuo de lishi de bianqian" 中國小説的歷史的變遷 in *Lu Xun quanji*, Beijing, Renmin wenxue, vol. 9.

[450] Ning Jiayu, 1991, p. 13. Gu Nong agrees on regarding the *Xiaolin* as the first *zhiren xiaoshuo*, see Gu Nong, 2000, p. 80.

[451] What Lu Xun and Ning Jiayu define as *zhiren xiaoshuo*, Hou Zhongyi and also Chen Wenxin define as *Yishi xiaoshuo* 軼事小説, on the reason why see Chen Wenxin, 2002, p. 16. Hou Zhongyi divides *Yishi xiaoshuo* in three categories: "xiaohua leiù" 笑話類, "suoyan lei" 瑣言類, and "yishi lei" 軼事類; the *Shishuo xinyu* is part of the *suoyan* category, see Hou Zongyi, 1990, pp. 171-186. Hou Zongyi is the author of another famous work of literary theory written with Yuan Xingpei at the beginning of the Eighties, the *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo shumu* 中國文言小說書目, Beijing, Beijing daxue, 1981, which has been harshly criticized by John Brien Brennan, who defined it as "a sprawling work that is very thin in many places and seems to have been assembled in haste without clear objectives in mind;" see Brennan 1985, p. 183.

[452] Hou Zhongyi, 1990, p. 99.

[453] In several articles written by Chinese scholars it seems that is not perceived a clear distinction between joke, a fictional text created to entertain, and *yuyan*, a fictional text created to mean something else; they just overlap on each other. Except for the example given in the paragraph, Li Changyu in an article explains that the *Xiaolin*'s story about the man of Lu who was carrying a pole is normally present in books for junior-middle and high school, and is regarded as a *yuyan* from which the student, analyzing it, has to take out a teaching; Li Yuchang, 1989, p. 10-11. Moreover, the stories of the *Xiaolin* are usually collected together with masters works' *yuyan* in such a kind of works like: 1981, *Zhongguo gudai yuyan xuan* 中國古代寓言選, Beijing, Renmin wenxue; Chen Puqing 陳蒲清, 1983, *Zhongguo gudai yuyan xuan* 中國古代寓言選, Changsha, Hunan renmin; Gong Mu 公木, 1990, *Lidai yuyan xuan* 歷代寓言選, Beijing, Zhongguo qingnian. Another evidence of a misleading use of *xiaohua* for *yuyan* is found in Gu Nong's article, "Zhongguo zuizao de xiaoshuojia: Handan Chun," see Gu Nong, 2000, p. 80. The fact that *Xiaolin*'s stories can be easily understood as *yuyan* could be an additional proof of the fact that they were not written as jokes (this is my thesis). It is interesting to note that, even if western literary history differentiates fables (Chinese *yuyan*) from jokes, in ancient Greek the Aesopic corpus and the *Philogelos*' jokes have been transmitted often in the same *codices.* Their structures are very similar and they have and unquestionable affinity; see Andreassi 2004, pp. 42-43.

[454] Hou Zhongyi, 1990, p. 99.

[455] The other categories are "shishuo ti" 世說体 and "zaji" 雜記 (which corresponds to Hou Zhongyi's "suoyan lei" and "yishi lei;" Chen Wenxin clearly defines the *Xiaolin* as the "first collection of jokes" (*di yi bu xiaohua ji* 第一部笑話集), Chen Wenxin, 2002, p. 171.

He describes the pre-Qin jokes (he still calls it *xiaohua*) with the words of Liu Xie saying that "using tricky words and embellished speeches, [they] restrained [their] confused and tyrannical lords"[456] and "in spite of their tortuous speeches, they always aim toward the right principle." Obviously, he is referring to the humorous speeches of the "Guji liezhuan"'s protagonists (as Liu Xie was), but those stories are a Han dynasty product, as it was the Han dynasty historian who wrote them. Moreover, it has been illustrated in the previous chapter that the anecdotes about Chunyu Kun and the jesters were consciously constructed to convey moral teaching, and few "historical" information were given in their narratives. Therefore, it is impossible to define them as historical records of jesters' humorous speeches. The way they are narrated and embedded in a larger context makes them "remonstrances" with a political lesson to convey. It can not be said that they are sources to understand pre-Qin jokes. The problem concerning today's literary historians is that they are interested, on the one hand, in preserving autochthon theories of literary hermeneutics (so that they largely use quotations from *Wenxin diaolong*), and on the other, in explaining, diachronically, literary evolution according to more specified categories on western style. The result is that even if the textual material appears more systematized, sometimes the synchronic value of the text is lost, or not taken into consideration. In this particular case, these scholars try to look for *Xiaolin*'s previous legacy following primarily Liu Xie's explanation, then they anachronistically consider the *Xiaolin* as the first evidence of a genre because in later times several authors have taken it as a source of inspiration to compose their works, but the motivations given for their understanding are not satisfying. My concern is mainly about Handan Chun's awareness of being an author of jokes, if he arranged on purpose the narrative to obtain a humorous effect. Chen Wenxin believes in the authorial awareness of Handan Chun. He believes that Handan Chun consciously changed some features of previous stories in order to create a humorous effect. He gives the following example comparing an anecdote taken from the *Shiji* and a *Xiaolin*'s story (Story No. 2):[457]

[456] *WXDL* 3/15. 194. To quote the *Wenxin diaolong* here generates a misunderstanding as Liu Xie in his "Xie yin" chapter is not defining a genre, nor a specified category of texts, but a feature common to different kinds of works (as *shi* poetry, *fu* poetry, folksongs, anecdotes, wits and jests) which are grouped together because Liu Xie recognizes in them a jesting quality.
[457] Chapter 4. 3, story No. 2; Chen Wenxin, 2002, pp. 171-172.

藺相如曰：“王以名使括，若胶柱而鼓瑟耳。趙括能讀其父書傳，不知應變也。”

Lin Xiangru said: “If you now replace me with [Zhao] Kuo, it would be like gluing the small bridges of the *se* (a type of zither) and [then] try to play it. Zhao Kuo can read his father’s texts and records [about war], [but] does not know how to apply [their teachings].”[458]

齊人就趙人學瑟，因之先調，膠柱而歸，三年不成一曲。齊人怪之，有從趙來者，問其意，方知向人之愚。

A man from Qi learned to play the *se* instrument from a man of Zhao. According to the pitch he had previously tuned up, he glued the [instrument’s] small bridges and went back home. In three years he was not able to complete a single song. The man of Qi thought that it was [very] strange, [when] a man of Zhao came by, he asked him his opinion, therefore that man knew he was talking with a stupid.[459]

The first story records the speech made by Lin Xiangru (3rd century BC) to convince the King Xiaocheng 孝成 of Zhao to not replace General Lian Po 廉頗 with Zhao Kuo (d. 280 BC) in the battle with the Qin army. Zhao Kuo was the son of the famous general Zhao She 趙奢 and the King of Zhao thought that he could be as valorous as his father in finding a strategy to win Qin’s army. Nevertheless, Lin Xiangru’s words explained that Zhao Kuo had learned without profit from his father’s figure, and he was useless as a general as a *se* with its strings glued. The image of the act of gluing the *se* instrument is then used as a metaphor for learning without understanding and true mastering. The *Xiaolin*, instead, presents the comparison expressed by Lin Xiangru (“it is like gluing the small bridges of the *se* and try to play it”) as an independent story in which the protagonist is a numskull who glued together strings and *se*’s bridges thinking that in this way it would be still possible to play the music. Chen Wenxin explains that Handan Chun transformed (*gaizao* 改造) the allegorical expression in a story of daily-life comedy.[460] This is an unlikely explanation. Scholars, who have researched the Greek and Roman traditions

[458] *SJ* 81. 2446.
[459] *TPGJ* 262. 2053.
[460] Chen Wenxin, 2002, p. 171.

of numskull tales or animal tales, have shown that legends (which are tales represented as having a claim to historicity, i.e. narratives treated as historical) are probably special adaptations of a more general story (mostly circulating orally).[461] *Shiji*'s anecdote is a case of an even more elaborate literary process than to adapt real locality and cast supposedly historical characters to a general tale; it is an example of rhetorically crafted speech. It is then more probable that the *Shiji*'s author shaped the speech of Lin Xiangru and created an allegory echoing a famous tale about the numskull of Qi, and that Handan Chun collected, not created, a version of this general tale (used in Sima Qian's text as a metaphor in the speech of Li Xiangru) which we suppose was famous, and which he regarded as funny. Hence, it can be assumed that Handan Chun was the collector and not the creator of the material grouped under the *Xiaolin* title. Furthermore, it has previously been shown that the brief narratives presented by Handan have a very heterogeneous nature; most anecdotes appear similar to the *yuyan*, some could be or are real *yuyan* extrapolated from previous text, others feature historical characters and are similar to the anecdotes collected by the *Shishuo xinyu*. What appears evident is that the morphology of the *Xiaolin*'s anecdotes does not show consistent differences from previously existing kinds of stories. In other words, it is not possible to regard its narratives as new kinds of texts as they do not show new strategies, which differentiate them from previous literary products. Hence, the texts are not written as "jokes," because the author does not show an awareness of creating something the narrative of which is constructed to provoke a humorous effect.

Nevertheless, some of *Xiaolin*'s stories could have been told like "jokes." Liu Xie says: "Wei-wen (Cao Pi) used comic themes to write jokes, and Xuan Zong jested sarcastically during a diplomatic reception. These jokes, though effective in producing merriment during a feast, serve no practical purposes. And yet good writers often went out of their way to join in the fun"[462] or "[the scholars at the Cao's court] moving with leisurely grace while they feasted, composed songs with a swing of the brush, and out of the well-ground ink created witty pieces that served as subject of talk and laughter."[463] These quotes clearly describe an atmosphere in which the "humorous" texts were enjoyed during social gatherings. These witty

[461] Hansen 2002, p. 16.
[462] *WXDL* 3/15. 194; trans. Shih, 1983, p. 157.
[463] *WXDL* 9/45. 540-541, see Chapter 1. 4.

stories were written by the scholars, but then they were probably orally read in a social performance, and enjoyed for their own sake, for pleasure. Then, as far as the *Xiaolin*'s stories are concerned, their narratives could possibly have served as the essences for jokes between courtiers so that the *Xiaolin* could be considered a repository of good stories to be told for court entertainment.[464] The reader could have worked them out for retelling upon a social occasion. Of course this is only a speculation, as there is no other information regarding this particular text, and it is not known if these stories were engaged in a particular kind of performance. However, the society in which the *Xiaolin* has taken form allowed a new kind of social interaction between scholars and the educated elite, and the "humorous" topic was very appreciated by these kinds of figures. Hence, it would be possible to imagine a reader of the *Xiaolin* retelling an already amusing story in a more lively way during a conversation, and working it up to compose a joke. Thus I suggest the following conclusions which may help to revisit the various statements presented about the text:

- The *Xiaolin* was probably a heterogeneous collection of stories, grouped together because they were regarded as funny and amusing, so as to say pleasant to read.
- The stories do not show particular narrative innovations, which could differentiate them as a genre from previous texts on the basis of formal features.
- The author of the *Xiaolin* is probably the collector and not the creator of the narrative material. At least it can be stated that when he did not collect stories from other works he wrote down in the *wenyan* language stories he heard, but he did not invent new plots.

[464] I made this assumption about the use of the *Xiaolin* thanks to Hansen's statements about the *Philogelos*. Regarding *Philogelos*'s cultural background, he says: "It was common Greek notion that a participant in a dinner party who did not contribute to the food should contribute to the wit, that is, to the amusement of the guests (Athenaios I4. 6I4C). Ancient literature frequently mentions the "buffoon" or "parasite" who is invited to a dinner party in order to amuse the other guests with his humor or who shows up uninvited hoping to trade his wit for a meal. At gathering described by Xenophon (*Symposium* I.II-I6), for example, Philip the buffoon shows up uninvited and attempts […] to amuse the rather intellectual guests with his simple wisecracks. In comedies such characters are sometimes represented as keeping joke-books at home from which they can draw witticism;" Hansen 1998, pp. 272-273. However it appears from Hansen description that the authors of such a kind of collections of witticisms were primarily jesters (parasite), while in China the first attested collection of witticism is ascribed to a scholar, Handan Chun.

- The *Xiaolin* was recorded in the written language of the period, the same employed for philosophical and historical texts; it was certainly addressed to a particular audience which was personified by the educated elite of later Han-Wei times of which the author himself was a part.[465]
- This collection of anecdotes could have been intended as a later end. The anecdotes, amusing when read, could have been used as plots on which jokes are built during social conversations. According to this, the *Xiaolin* could be defined as a repository of plots, a sort of a handbook for witty conversation.

Thus according to what has been said above, the idea of Hou Zhongyi and Chen Wenxin classifying the *Xiaolin* in its own category, as if it was conceived as a defined genre with distinct formal features, is misleading. They tried to improve Lu Xun's classification, which grouped Handan Chun's text in the same category of the *Shishuo xinyu*.[466] However, Lu Xun paid more attention to the historical background of the text, and was more careful in his analysis; the close relationship he identified with *Shiushuo xinyu* is correct.[467]

[465] In this regard, even if some of the stories (especially those about numskulls) could have a "popular" taste, and the text is quoted in modern works about "Folk literature" (*minjian wenxue* 民間文學; the written jokes are defined as oral- derived literature. See about the *Xiaolin*'s inclusion in such a kind of category Duan Yulin, 2002, pp. 95-96). However, this text can not be confused as a work of folk literature. It was written in *wenyan* by a scholar and it was not directed to the common people (folk) but to member of his equal social status.

[466] Lu Xun, 2005a, p. 66.

[467] Lu Xun says: "since the *Xiaolin* selects [matters] that transgress [common rules] and exposes [men] weakness, it can be considered as belonging to the same category as *Shishuo xinyu*. Afterwards it became the sprout of humorous literature;" Lu Xun 2005a, p. 66. From his brief account it appears that Lu Xun was conscious that the *Xiaolin* was not a separate genre, and that only later, when more defined texts with humorous characteristics appeared, it was seen as the former antecedent of these new kind of texts.

2. 3. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analysed first how small narratives, which are united by common motifs, work in a structured text. Drawing attention to their small differences and their similarities, we have first analysed the anecdotes presenting a "substantiated judgment," which is also the drive behind which these narratives are constructed (*Hanshi waizhuan, Shuiyuan, Lu Lianzi*). Then, we have seen how Chu Shaosun shaped common motifs to create an entertaining piece of narrative. The cultural atmosphere at the Western Han court allowed a kind of new writing, the entertaining type. Still, Chu Shaosun embedded his innovative prose in a historical text, whose narratives were mainly driven according to the moral value of traditional historical lore. Handan Chun, in the end, did not show, as Chu Shaosun, a self-aware authorship, he did not compose innovative narratives. What was innovative of him was to collect already existing forms of narratives in a text which, by its title, shifted their reading-paradigm: from an educative-moralizing one to an entertaining one. By framing the stories with a new title (Forest of laughs), Handan Chun actually created a new kind of text, a text whose aim was clearly indicated as amusing the reader. The appearance in Wei times of such a type of text states a clear changing in the cultural panorama and, as Lu Xun rightly pointed out, the birth of self aware literature in classical China.[468]

[468] Lu Xun quoted T. Gautier sating that Wei Jin period sees the birth of "art for art's sake:" "曹丕的一個時代可說是'文學的自覺時代'，或如近代所說是為藝術而藝術 (Art for Art's sake) 的一派;" Lu Xun, 2004, p. 138.

Chapter 3 –Handan Chun - a man of his own time

This chapter concerns biographical records about Handan Chun and his literary work. We will analyse all the existing fragments recording his life and his deeds, as they are preserved in historical records (in particular, in the *Sanguo zhi* and the *Weilüe*), and accordingly, we will describe his literary compositions, trying to date them and relate them to the events occurring in his life. The aim of this chapter is not only to give an historical account of Handan Chun's life, but mainly to show him as a characteristic figure of the educated elite of Later Han-Wei times. In order to do this, the chronological narration of the events will be alternated with inquiries about three topics, closely related to his figure which are also iconic for the members of the educated elite of the time and which enable a better understanding of the educated society of Wei-Jin period. The three topics are: calligraphy, riddle-like forms of literary compositions, and social games. We will see that a growing interest towards all these three issues was already appearing during the Han dynasty, but it acquired a defined independent value only during the Wei period.

Handan Chun was a scholar who passed most of his life under the Han empire, but when it collapsed, he served the Wei court, one of the most important political realities born after the falling of the political unity. The life of Handan Chun and his contemporaries also suggests that the collapse of the Han and political change from the unified empire to several competing states, on a cultural level, was not as traumatic as it is generally believed. The Wei court provided a cultural atmosphere and social environment in which Handan Chun as a man of Later Han could still find his place and continue his career. This would also mean that there must have been in the new political reality a cultural continuity with the previous society. Handan Chun's life could be taken as proof that the traditional view, which saw the new situation, emerging in the third century at the collapsing of the Han empire as a period of "cultural crisis" and "identity crisis" as questionable. Thomas Jansen has correctly summed up: "In spite of the perceived dangers or uncertainties of the external world there seems to be not sufficient evidence to conclude that the political breakdown of the Han and the onslaught of non-Chinese peoples had

created a situation which was broadly perceived as being radically different in quality from what has been remembered about the rise and fall of dynasties in the past. Rather than shaking the foundations of empire, the dissolution of the unified world of the Han offered new options."[469]

3.1. Few records for a famous scholar

Historical records preserve little information about Handan Chun's life, and sometimes they appear contradictory. The first problematic issue regarding his personality concerns his courtesy name (*zi*). The *Weilüe*'s passage quoted in the Pei Songzhi's commentary to the *Sanguo zhi* states that Handan had another name other than Chun, and it was Zhu 竺.[470] As far as his courtesy name is concerned, some texts record it as Zishu 子叔,[471] while some others as Zili 子禮.[472] In the past, the presence of two different courtesy names[473] led scholars to speculate that there could have been two men named Handan Chun.[474] Nevertheless, Lu Kanru noticed that it was a common feature for the members of the educated elite to be recorded by more than one courtesy name; for examples, Li You 李尤 (Later Han) is recorded as Boren 伯仁 and Bozong 伯宗,[475] Ruan Kan 阮侃 (Jin dynasty) as Deru 德如 and Denu 德怒, Ji Han 嵇含 (263–306) as Jundao 君道 and Sidao 思道, etc. Therefore, according to Li Kanru, the fact that Handan Chun appears in some texts with

[469] Jansen, 2008, p. 403.
[470] *SGZ* 21. 603, n. 1.
[471] *SGZ* 21. 603, n. 1; Yan Kejun follows the *Weilüe*, *QSGW* 26. 1195.
[472] As recorded in the *Kuaiji dianlu* 會稽典錄 quoted by the commentary of the *Houhan shu*, *HHS* 84. 2795, n. 2. As Zili he is recorded also in the *Shuijingzhu* 水經注40. 947.
[473] Except Zishu and Zili, the *Wenxin diaolong* at the "Shixu" 時序chapter records Handan's courtesy name as Yushu 于叔, which Huang Shulin 黃叔琳 glosses as Zi Chu 子儵 (he also explained that in two editions the name appears as Zishu, in eight as Zichu), *WXDL* 9/45. 557. The *Yiwen leiju* records Zishu 子淑, *YWLJ* 48. 849.
[474] This is the opinion of Gu Huaisan 顧攘三 as it appears in his *Bu Hou Hanshu yiwenzhi* 补後漢書藝文志, *juan* 8 and of Wang Zhong 汪中 in his *Jiuxue xuyi* 舊學蓄疑; see Lu Kanru 1985, p. 202.
[475] *HHS* 80. 2616.

different names does not create a problem of identity for the historical figure of Handan Chun.

There is also a discrepancy between the accounts regarding Handan Chun's homeland. It is generally acknowledged that he comes from Yingchuan 潁川,[476] but a few accounts say that he was from Chenliu 陳留.[477] However, the possibility of different place of origin does not generate confusion in discussions about the identity of this person.[478]

According to the textual material available, it is not possible to establish the date of Handan Chun's birth. The early account regarding his life appears at the occasion of the commemorative inscription for Cao E 曹娥 stele. Cao E lived in Shangyu city, in Kuaiji county,[479] and was the young daughter of the *wu*-priest Cao Xu 曹盱. Her father drowned himself during a ritual,[480] so she sat down by the bank of the river for seventeen days, waiting to see his body appear. According to one record, she threw her clothes in the water praying they were able to reach her father. When she saw them sunk, she jumped into the water and died.[481] This happened in 143 AD, as recorded by the "Lienü zhuan" 列女傳 chapter of the *Houhan shu*,[482] and Cao E at that time was fourteen years old. In 151 the county magistrate Du Shang 度尚 (117–166) decided to erect a stele to commemorate Cao E's filial piety.

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[476] *SGZ* 21. 603, n. 1; *QSW* 26. 1195. Yingchuan was located in today Henan province, in the South East of Luoyang area, a strategic site during early Wei period.

[477] Chen Liu was located in today Henan province, in Qi杞 county. Basically, only Wei Shou 魏收's (506–572 AD) *Weishu* 魏書, at the *juan* 91 (quoted also in *TPGJ* 209. 1598) and Li Yanshou 李延壽's (fl. 618–676 AD) *Beishi* 北史, at the *juan* 34, record that Handan came from Chenliu. Lu Bi, in the commentary of his *Sanguozhi jijie* (21. 515), records these two occurrences without commenting them.

[478] Wang Liqi, 1956, p. 1; Ning Jiayu, 1991, p. 13; Hou Zhongyi, 1990, p. 100.

[479] Located in today Zhejiang province.

[480] Eberhard (1969, p. 393) records: "Cao E father, who was a magician, "received" the flood and was drowned in the process." He then links Cao Xu's death with the Dragon Boat Festival and says: "It is perfectly clear that the boat race is a fight between two parties and the losing party is sacrificed;" Eberhard, 1969, p. 396. Derk Bodde (1975, pp. 310–315) agrees with Eberhard's view in considering this episode a case of "traditional drowning." David Hawks (1985, p. 119, n. 7) translates the *Hou Hanshu*'s passage as following: "Cao Xu was a skilled musician and a *wu*-priest. On the fifth day of the fifth month of the year Han'an he was drowned while rowing out towards the oncoming bore to meet the god with dancing in the Shangyu river, and his body was never recovered;" 父盱，能絃歌，為巫祝。漢安二年五月五日，於縣江泝濤迎婆娑神，溺死，不得屍骸; *HHS* 84. 2794. David Hawks explains that the god of the tidal bore was Wuzi Xu 伍子胥, who at that time was the local river god at Shangyu. He also points out that the fifth day of the fifth month is the Dragon Boat Festival, and that Cao Xu was probably on a dragon boat when he died; Hawks 1985, p. 120.

[481] *HHS* 84. 2794, n. 1.

[482] *HHS* 84. 2794.

A passage from the *Kuaiji dianlu* 會稽典錄,[483] quoted in the commentary of the *Houhan shu*,[484] illustrates that Du Shang first commissioned Wei Lang 魏朗 (d. 169, at the time a local official who was famous for his skill in composition) to write her stele inscription. Wei Lang composed it, but before presenting it he met Du Shang at a drinking banquet. The county magistrate asked him if the work was finished, but Wei Lang, with modesty, answered negatively and apologized for his lacking of skill. Du Shang, therefore, promptly asked Handan Chun,[485] who was also attending the banquet, to write the inscription. Handan Chun quickly composed it without revising and the result was so good that Wei Lang destroyed his own draft.[486] Handan Chun in this account is described as "just twenty years old, and possessing extraordinary talents" 甫弱冠而有異才. According to this record, then, he was probably born around 130 AD.[487]

This brief anecdote, other than presenting historical information about our author, elucidates the atmosphere and the context in which the commemorative steles were composed. As Ken Brashier points out, this inscription was written by a scholar during a banquet, which was an occasion often associated with writing poetry. According to him, this environment suggests that Handan Chun wrote the stele's hymn and not the biographical preface about Cao E.[488] Brashier then states: "Writing a stele was regarded as writing poetry. […] and in the lists of surviving literary contributions appended to the end of 14 *Hou Hanshu* biographies, the stelae genre is

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[483] This text, now lost, was written by Yu Yu 虞預 (?285–340?). The extant fragments were collected by Lu Xun in 1915, and published in his *Kuaiji jun gu shu zaji* 會稽郡故書雜集, see Lu Xun 1973, pp. 12-70.

[484] *HHS* 84. 2795, n. 2.

[485] The *Shuijingzhu* records this event saying: "Du Shang made his nephew Handan Chu Zili write the stele inscription" 度尚使外甥邯鄲淳子禮為碑文. Only the *Shuijingzhu* (40. 947) records a kinship between the two men. The fragment of the *Kuaiji dianlu* quoted by Li Xian in the commentary of the *Houhan shu* passage (quoted in the primary text), and the fragment quoted in the commentary of the *Shishuo xinyu* (*SSXY* 11/3. 580), both record Handan Chun as a disciple of Du Shang.

[486] *HHS* 84. 2795, n.2.

[487] Shen Yucheng 沈玉成 and Shi Xuancong 傅璇琮 in their "Handan Chun xuan 'Cao E' bei ji *Xiaolin* bianyi" 邯鄲淳撰《曹娥碑》及《笑林》辨疑, state that, probably, the Handan Chun who wrote the Cao E's inscription was not the same Handan who wrote the *Xiaolin*. The reasons they give for their statement are: first, the *Kuaiji dianlu* records a Handan whose courtesy name is Zilu (on this issue see the primary text in the previous section of this chapter); second, if we consider reliable that this Handan is the author of the *Xiaolin*, he then wrote it in his nineties. Considering that he was too old for doing it (or even to be alive), they discharge this second hypothesis, see Zhang Kechao, 2006, p. 62.

[488] Handan Chun's text is preserved in the *QSGW* 26. 1196. The text is divided in two parts, the first describes Cao E's life, the second is a eulogy in poetry of her filial behaviour. This is a typical format of stele inscriptions. For further information about this topic see Olga Lomová, Yeh Kuo-liang, 2004, *Ach běda, přeběda — oplakávání mrtvých v čínském středověku*, Praha, DharmaGaia.

usually grouped with hymns and other types of poetry. […] Like Greek stelae, Han grave inscriptions were not meant to be read in silence, and several offer details on incorporating music within their ancestral evocations."[489] Therefore, it is clear that activities involving poetry, even in Wei period, were linked to social performance. This kind of literary products could be created and enjoyed at social occasions. Moreover, this anecdote shows that literary skills were a source of social prestige among the aristocracy of the time. Handan's mastery in poetic and calligraphic arts allowed him to be welcomed into the educated elite's society.

3. 2. Cao E stele's inscription: a story about riddles

To the commemorative stele of Cao E are linked other stories, which, even if they are not directly connected to Handan Chun, are worth recording here. They involve, in fact, characteristic figures of Handan Chun's time. The *Kuaiji dianlu*'s fragment quoted previously, ends recording that Cai Yong[490] read the inscription and wrote on the reverse side of the stele eight characters (*huangjuan youfu waisun jijiu* 黃絹幼婦外孫虀臼),[491] which at first glance do not make sense. This account is regarded as historically reliable.[492] The *Shishuo xinyu* then records an anecdote which involves Cao Cao and Yang Xiu reading Cao E stele. In particular, the anecdote is focused on Cai Yong's series of characters. It says as follows:

> 魏武嘗過曹娥碑下，楊脩從，碑背上見題作"黃絹幼婦，外孫虀臼"八字。魏武謂脩曰："解不？"答曰："解。"魏武曰："卿未可言，待我思之。"行三十里，魏武乃曰："吾已得。"令脩別記所知。脩曰："黃絹，色絲也，於字為絕。幼婦，少女也，於字為妙。外孫，女子也，於字為

[489] Brashier 2009, pp. 1034-35.
[490] According to Lu Kanru (1985, p. 274) this, maybe, happened around 179 AD.
[491] The *Yiyuan* 異苑, a text ascribed to Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔 (5th century) and recorded in the bibliographical chapter of the *Suishu* at the "Zazhuan" 雜傳 section (*SS* 33. 980) says that Cai Yong, passing through Wu state, saw Cao E stele and read its inscription. He then "recognized that it was written by a poet" (*yiwei shi ren zhi zuo* 以爲詩人之作) and added his eight characters. The *Yiyuan*'s fragment is quoted in the *Shishuo xinyu's* commentary, see *SSXY* 11/3. 581.
[492] Liu Yibing, 2002, p. 12.

> 好。蠆臼，受辛也，於字為辭。所謂‘絕妙好辝’也。”魏武亦記之，與脩同，乃歎曰：“我才不及卿，乃覺三十里。”
>
> Emperor Wu of the Wei [Cao Cao] once passed beneath the memorial stele to the maid Cao E, accompanied by Yang Xiu. On the back of the stele they saw an inscription in eight characters:
>
> *Huangjuan yufu waisun jijiu* (yellow pongee, young wife, maternal grandson, ground in a mortar). Cao Cao asked Xiu, "Do you understand it?" He replied, "Yes." Cao Cao said, "Don't tell me; wait while I think about it." After they had travelled for thirty *li*, Cao Cao finally said "I've got it!" He then had Xiu record separately what he had understood it to mean. Xiu wrote "*Huangjuan* 黃絹 (yellow pongee) is *sesi* 色絲 (coloured silk) which, combined in one character, is *jue* 絕 (utterly). *Youfu* 幼婦 (young wife) is *shaonü* 少女 (young woman), which, combined in one character is *miao* 妙 (marvellous). *Waisun*外孫 (maternal grandson) is *nüzi* 女子 (woman's son), which combined in one character is *hao* 好 (good). *Jijiu* 蠆臼 (ground in a mortar) is *shouxin* 受辛 (suffer hardship), which combined in one character is *ci* 辝 (words).[493] Thus all together they mean: 'utterly marvellous, good words.'" Cao Cao had also recorded it in the same way that Xiu had. He said with a sigh, "My ability is thirty *li* slower than yours!"[494]

This anecdote explains that the eight characters written by Cai Yong meant *juemiao haoci* 絕妙好辝, "utterly marvellous, good words," and later these words have been widely used to praise beautifully written compositions.[495] This account is probably in part fictional. Cao Cao and Yang Xiu never went to Kuaiji, so it was impossible for them to read in person Cao E stele.[496] This anecdote could then be explained in two ways. If the protagonists were not Cao Cao and Yang Xiu, maybe someone made up a story focusing on Cai Yong's riddle employing two famous figures of Wei time, rearranging an anecdote circulated orally. However, it could also be that Cao Cao actually discussed the riddle's content with Yang Xiu at Wei's court, and whoever wrote this *Shishuo xinyu*'s story[497] changed some features, stating that the

[493] *Ci* 辝 is a variant of *ci* 辭 "words."
[494] *SSXY* 11/3. 580; trans. with slight modifications, Mather, 1976, p. 293.
[495] Zhang Wanqi and Liu Shangci, 2003, p. 559, n. 5.
[496] *SSXY* 11/3. 581.
[497] The *Shishuo xinyu* is conventionally attributed to Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444) but the problem of its real authorship is still open; see Qian Nanxiu, 2001, n. 1 p. 381.

conversation happened at Kuaiji.[498] The anecdote is worthy of note here because this Cai Yong's composition is the first attested riddle crafted for aesthetic purposes.

Traditionally, the riddles were defined by the same moralistic-didactic view which saw *fu* poetry as a tool to convey teaching. I suppose that riddles were an oral entertainment since Warring States time, but when they were recorded in the textual material they were only used as a rhetoric craft to convey teaching. The "Guji liezhuan" offers a proof for this statement. In one of the anecdotes, which I analysed in the first chapter of this thesis, Chunyu Kun employs the riddle of the "big bird" to persuade the Sovereign to stop drinking and neglecting the government. In a similar way, in other anecdotes of Warring States and Western Han times, the riddles are analogously employed as a tool for remonstrance.[499] Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the same "Guji"'s anecdote says that Chunyu Kun used a riddle for his remonstrance because "King Wei of Qi liked riddles (*xi yin* 喜隱)."[500] I think that it is clear that King Wei enjoyed riddles as a form of entertainment, so for Chunyu Kun it was easy to trick him. He, in fact, pretending to amuse him, remonstrated against his behaviour.

In fact the playful riddles, such as those enjoyed by King Wei, are not recorded in early textual material. In the part of the *Hanshu*'s "Yiwenzhi" where the miscellaneous *fu* poetry (*za fu* 雜賦) are grouped, it appears only a *Yinshu* 隱書in 18 *pian*, now lost.[501] As Knechtges notes, the riddle, therefore, "might have been considered a special type of *fu* that never achieved much popularity"[502] (at least as an independent literary subject). The only pre-Han surviving specimens are those in the "Fu pian" 賦篇 of *Xunzi*,[503] which however as a chapter was greatly rearranged by

[498] Liu Yibing, 2002, p. 12. Lu Kanru also believes Cao Cao comments about Cai Yong's riddling comment as credible; he states that maybe someone reported the content to him; see Lu Kanru, 1985, p. 274.
[499] For other anecdotes employing riddles to remonstrate see Schaberg 2005b, p. 198, and n. 13, p. 220.
[500] *SJ* 126. 3197.
[501] It could also mean a plurality of textual materials. Knechtges (1976, p. 19) translates this *Hanshu*'s reference as: "eighteen *yinshu* or 'riddles'."
[502] Knechtges, 1976, p. 19.
[503] The *fu* recorded in the *Xunzi*'s "Fu pian" 賦篇 are in form of a riddle; see *XZ* 18/26. 472-484. This chapter would deserve a separate discussion, as scholars still debate whether its content could be or not ascribed to the master of Warring States period. An overview of the past and present opinions can be found in the article by Wang Xiaoqing (2008, "Xun Qing fu shi pian kao" 荀卿賦十篇考, in *Tushuguan*, No. 6, pp. 38-40), who sides for the authenticity of the *fu* recorded in the "Yiwenzhi" (*HS* 30. 1750). He, moreover, states (2008, p. 39) that the "Yiwenzhi"'s record refers to the "Fupian" chapter of the *Xunzi*. Andrew Plaks (1996, p. 230) affirms that the *fu* in the *Xunzi* (in particular, he is talking about the "Can fu" 蠶賦) "has no apparent purpose other than as a playful exercise in wit."

Liu Xiang. Yan Shigu, in the commentary of the *Hanshu*, quotes a passage taken from Liu Xiang's "Bielu," which says: "*Yinshu* means to be hesitant with one's words in questioning someone. The one who responds thus ponders and thinks about it. In this way, one can be assured of elucidation."[504] This comment implies that the riddle is here understood as a device for (moral) teaching and persuasion and "it is effective because it leads to a spontaneous and voluntary conversion of the person being persuaded."[505]

Neither Liu Xiang, nor Ban Gu added a comment on a possible entertaining feature of the "riddle" composition. As far as literary history is concerned, the riddle then shares the same destiny as that of the *fu*. According to them, a riddle is worthy of being recorded only as an instrument for persuasion. The "Yiwenzhi," as stated previously, does not divide *fu* from *yin*. Liu Xie, instead, tries to explain "riddle" in his own separate section. The second part of the "Xieyin" chapter is in fact dedicated to *yin* 隱, "riddle or enigma."[506] However, following the patterns of judgment employed for the *fu* poetry, he agrees with the two Liu and Ban Gu's view, seeing riddles positively only if employed for didactic functions. This issue appears evident in the following passage:

> 隱語之用，被于紀傳。大者興治濟身，其次弼違曉惑。蓋意生于權譎，而事出于機急，與夫諧辭，可相表里者也。
>
> Cases of employment of *yin* speeches are preserved in the historical records; the important ones served to promote good government and helped develop personality, and some of the minor ones could also correct errors and dissolve

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However, Liu Xiang affirms that Xun Qing wrote *fu* to admonish (*Daru Sun Qing* […] *zuo fu yi feng* 大儒孫卿作賦以風, *HS* 30. 1756). He does not group *Xunzi*'s *fu* with the playful ones written by Mei Gao and Dongfang Shuo. Nevertheless, Liu Xie in the "Quanfu" 詮賦 chapter, regarding *Xunzi*'s *fu*, says: "analysing *Xunzi*'s chapter, it employs riddle-structure, [the *fu*] describe things in a winding way" 觀夫荀 結隱語，事數自環; *WXDL* 2/8. 96. Still, he makes the moral decay start after Xunzi, with Song Yu. He did not acknowledge the playful nature of *Xunzi*'s *fu*. For other information about the "Fu pian" see Knechtges, 1976, pp. 18-21; Willhelm, 1957, pp. 316-317.

[504] *HS* 30. 1753, n. 2; trans. Knechtges, 1976, p. 19.

[505] Knechtges, 1976, p. 19. Accordingly, Martin Kern, following Liu Xie's understanding, translates *yin* 隱 as "concealed [illustration];" Kern 2003b, p. 408, n. 81.

[506] "*Yin* 讔 or enigma, literally means to hide 隱: to use obscure language to hide a meaning or to employ clever analogies (*pijue* 譬譎) to point to something," *WXDL* 3/15. 195. "Enigma" is the translation given by Vincent Shi (1983, p. 154), because in Liu Xie's text it appears also the word *miyu* 謎語, more properly "riddle." It seems, then, that with *yin* are defined "enigmatic statements" and with *miyu* already well identified kind of composition. But actually this is a Liu Xie's definition. Warring States *yin* can also be defined as riddle, so, in the primary text, I normally use "riddle" and "enigma" as synonymous.

> doubts. Generally their use is in expediency, and it is employed at critical moments. Together with the humorous writings they may be considered to be two aspects of the same thing.[507]

The *yin* speeches are positively judged when they "promote good government" and "help develop personality," or "correct errors and dissolve doubts." They are useful if they accomplish at least one of these functions, but the entertaining function is not mentioned. Despite that, historical records attest a development of the practice of telling riddles as an entertaining game, especially during Western Han times.

3. 2. 1. Riddle-Games as an entertaining performance at Western Han court

In the *Hanshu* we find the evidence that the riddles were employed in the *shefu* 射覆 game, which consisted in guessing an object hidden under an overturned cup.[508] According to the records, one player described the hidden object by a riddle, while the other player had to solve the riddle to discover what was hidden under the cup. Dongfang Shuo is one of the key figures for this topic. He is described by the *Hanshu* as the court expert of *shefu* game. Thanks to his quick wit and language ability, no one was able to pin him down, and his mastery in solving and crafting riddles greatly amused the Emperor. His *Hanshu*'s biography records an anecdote linked to the *shefu* game, which involves another character, the attendant Guo (one of Wu emperor's attendants defined as *xiedu guixing* 媟黷貴幸, "improper favourite").[509] The attendant Guo challenged Dongfang Shuo in a competition of riddles to see who was the best at solving and crafting, and accepted to be beaten if Dongfang was able to solve his enigmas. But Dongfang Shuo quickly answered back to Guo's first attempt. At this point the record presents a humorous scene in which Dongfang's mastery is highlighted. Guo, having failed, is beaten and cries out in pain

[507] *WXDL* 3/15. 195.
[508] *HS* 65. 2843, n. 1.
[509] *HS* 51. 2367.

exclaiming "*bao/bo* 嚎" (a scream of pain). Dongfang, then, expresses a remark matching the rhyme with Guo's exclamation of pain:[510]

咄！口無毛，　Ugh, mouth with no hair,
聲謷謷，　Voice all ablare (*sheng ao ao*),
犊益高。　Rear end in the air.[511]

Dongfang Shuo is mocking Guo's suffering, answering in jest. Guo then complains that Dongfang is trying to humiliate him, but Dongfang Shuo excuses himself stating that he is only composing a riddle, which he explains as:

夫口無毛者，狗竇也；"Mouth with no hair," is the dog private door (*dou*).
聲謷謷者，鳥哺鷇也；"Voices all ablare," is (a bird) fledglings at supper, calling for more (*kou*).
尻益高者，鶴俛啄也．"Rear end in the air," is a crane, bending over, peeking at the floor (*zhuo*).[512]

Guo is not satisfied, and tries to beat Dongfang, composing a humorous rhyme (*xieyu* 諧語),[513] which is nonsense, asking him to discover the meaning:

令壺齟，Law pot snaggle-toothed (*ju*),
老柏塗，Age cypress mud-grooved (*tu*),
伊優亞，*yi-yu-ya*
狋吙牙。*ngi-ngu-nga*.[514]

[510] *HS* 65. 2845, n. 5.
[511] *HS* 65. 2844; trans. Watson, 1974, p. 82. In this case, Watson's translation is interesting because he maintains rhymes. It is difficult to translate in a western language maintaining the Chinese rhythm, so normally, I prefer a translation which rightly records the meanings, even if the rhymes are lost; but in this case, rhymes are important to give a description of the set of the riddle-game and its features. It is interesting to note that evidence of rhyming syllables are still preserved despite the pronunciation of characters differed from today modern Chinese pronunciation (for ancient phonology see: Pulleyblank, Edwin G, 1991, *Lexicon of reconstructed pronunciation in early Middle Chinese, late Middle Chinese, and early Mandarin*, Vancouver [B.C.], UBC Press.). In this case the meaning of the riddle itself is not so important.
[512] *HS* 65. 2844; trans. Watson, 1974, p. 82.
[513] Yan Shigu explains *xieyu* as "adapted rhymed words" 和韻之言, *HS* 65. 2846, n. 11.
[514] *HS* 65. 2844; Watson, 1974, p. 82.

Obviously he did not compose it having in mind a real answer; he quickly made up an absurd wit which had no real solution. But Dongfang Shuo answered back saying:

> 令者，命也。Law, an ordination.
>
> 壺者，所以盛也。Pot, to store your ration (*cheng*).
>
> 齟者，齒不正也。Snaggle-toothed, non-conformation (*zheng*).
>
> 老者，人所敬也。Age, what all men hail (*jing*).
>
> 柏者，鬼之廷也。Cypress, the spirits' vail (*ting*).
>
> 塗者，漸洳徑也。Mud-grooved, a soggy trail (*jing*).
>
> 伊優亞者，辭未定也。*Yi-yu-ya*, words merely jangling (*ding*).
>
> 狺吽牙者，兩犬爭也。*Ngi-ngu-nga*, two dogs tangling![515]

Andrew Plaks states that these rhymed compositions are an example of "literary riddle," which he defines as "a collective process of generating meaning that requires an almost contrapuntal interchange between cultivated players."[516] They are recorded in the *Hanshu* but probably Ban Gu used Dongfang Shuo's own writings as a source for his "Dongfang Shuo liezhuan."[517] We could assume then that he was probably the court poet, who wrote them down, but, generally, they were the product of extemporaneous oral performances in the presence of the emperor,[518] and their aim was to amuse him by an exposition of language craft used in a playful way. These riddles, according to the features presented by the *Hanshu*, share some similarities with the *fu* poetry mastered by Mei Gao, so that it appears understandable that Liu Xiang placed them in the same section of *fu* composition.[519] The entertaining nature of this kind of composition also received the same negative judgment assigned by

[515] *HS* 65. 2844-2845; trans. Watson, 1974, p. 82. Naturally, these words, during Han times, sound differently from today modern Chinese pronunciation; still, it is possible, even today, to see the assonance of several syllables. The rhymes are pointed out by Yan Shigu and other commentators, see *HS* 65. 2845, n. 5, 6; *HS* 65. 2845, n. 9, 10,12, 13.

[516] Plaks, 1996, p. 234.

[517] Declerq (1998, p. 38) states that Ban Gu had access to the original writings of Dongfang Shuo. Maybe these literary riddles were recorded in Dongfang's collection of writings listed in the *Hanshu* (30. 1741) as in 20 *pian*, now lost.

[518] Knechtges, regarding the riddles contained in the *Xunzi*'s "Fu pian," states: "Judging from the abundance of other oral conventions such as the dialogue and repetition of words it seems probable that these riddles belong to the tradition of the oral court recitation;" see Knechtges, 1976, p. 20.

[519] Zhou Fengwu (1988, pp. 404-405) is even more direct saying that the "riddle"-form of composition influenced the development of the Han *fu*. He stresses that the *yin* and the *fu* are two important examples of "court literature" (*gongting wenxue* 宮廷文學), and at the base of Qi and Liang dynasties' (later 5th sec) *yongwu* 詠物 poems and Northern Wei's (386-535**)** court passion for rhymed riddle games; see Zhou Fengwu, 1988, p. 403.

Liu Xie to Mei Gao's pieces. When it comes to illustrate Dongfang Shuo's mastery in riddles, Liu Xie says:

> 至東方曼倩，尤巧辭述。但謬辭詆戲，無益規補。
>
> Thereafter it came Dongfang Manjian (Dongfang Shuo), who was particularly clever in making [the riddles], but [his are made by] absurd statements and ridiculous jests**,** which have no use in admonishing or helping to solve problems.[520]

Dongfang Shuo's riddles, according to the accounts, even if in rhyme had an improvised oral nature. However, in Later Han-beginning of Wei period more refined and crafted kinds of compositions, which have a riddle like-nature, were appearing. Cai Yong's comment is the first attested example of the use of a riddle for aesthetic purpose. He eulogised Handan Chun's poem by composing a riddle made by characters. To decode its meaning they have to be converted into other characters, which, in turn, have to be merged together to show the shape of the real characters meant (to recall a passage, for example: *huangjuan* 黃絹 "yellow pongee" has to be understood as *sesi* 色絲 "coloured silk" which, combined in one character, is *jue* 絕 "utterly"). During Later Han times, this enigmatic way of combining characters were profusely employed by the *fangshi* 方士 (masters of arts) who were present at the court of Han emperors. In particular, under the reign of Emperor Guangwu 光武 (6 BC–57 AD), they were busy in composing apocryphal texts (*tuchen* 圖讖 "charts and prophecy"), which contained prophecies concerning political issues, encrypted in riddles made of characters.[521] Cai Yong's composition follows this tradition but uses it for a different purpose. He creates a playful aesthetic comment, which only

[520] *WXDL* 3/15. 195.

[521] For example, in the *Hou Hanshu*'s "Guangwu di ji" 光武帝紀 we find the record of a passage from an apocrypha which says: "*Mao* and *jin* will re-establish the virtue becoming the Son of Heaven" 卯金修德為天子, *HHS* 1. 22. *Mao* 卯 and *jin* 金 are two of the compounds which form the character *liu* 劉, the family name of Han dynasty emperors (as it is explained by the commentary, quoting the *Chunqiu yankong tu* 春秋演孔圖, *HHS* 1. 23, n. 7). The aim of this prophecy was to urge the Emperor Guangwu to announce to the Heaven the reestablishment of the Han dynasty after Wang Mang 王莽's (45 BC–23 AD) interregnum. To have more information about this topic see Mark, L. L, 1979, "Orthography riddles, divination, and word magic," in *Legend, lore, and religion in China: essays in honor of Wolfram Eberhard on his seventieth birthday*, Allan, Sarah, and Alvin P. Cohen (ed.), Asian library series, no. 13. San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, pp. 43-69, and Lippiello, Tiziana, 2000, "Interpreting Written Riddles: A typical Chinese Way of Divination," in *Linked Faiths: Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honour of Kristofer Schipper*, J. De Meyer and P. Engelfriet (ed.), Leiden, Brill, pp. 41-52.

educated elite, his pair, could decipher. As the *Shishuo xinyu*'s anecdote shows, to solve this kind of riddles became a social game and competition to show one's literary skill. This erudite game entered then into poetry.

3. 2. 2. Kong Rong and riddle-like poetry.

It is attested that Kong Rong 孔融 (153–208 AD),[522] younger than Cai Yong by twenty years, was the first to write a type of poem made of character based-riddles, which then established a literary form for poetry called *Liheshi* 離合詩 (Separating and combining).[523]

The poem, titled "Lihe shi jun xing ming zi shi" 離合詩郡姓名字詩 (Separating and combining poem, commandery, surname, name, courtesy name) is preserved inside the *Yiwen leiju*,[524] and is quoted in its entirety below:

漁父屈節，水潛匿方;
The fisherman[525] lowers his (social) status,
in the water he goes into hiding, he conceals [his] uprightness;
[*yu* 漁 is the key-character, if *shui* 水 is "hidden" (*qian* 潛), it is separated (*li* 離) from the character, and *yu* 魚 is left.]

[522] Kong Rong, a native of Qufu in today Shandong province, was a twentieth-generation descendant of Confucius. He was famous for his sarcastic wit and straightforward manners. Kong Rong was the protector and promoter of the young scholar Mi Heng 彌衡 (173–198 AD), who, as his master, had a sharp tongue and impudent manner. Mi Heng first stayed at Cao's court, but soon after, Cao Cao, not able to stand his insults anymore, sent him to Liu Biao (Lu Kanru, 1985, p. 317). His impertinence cost him his life, he was put to death in 198. In his famous poem "Yingwu fu" 鸚鵡賦 (The parrot) he personifies himself in the bird which is unable to shut up. This poem is translated in Knechtges, 1996, pp. 49-58. Here, it is also interesting to note that except Cao's court in Ye, Liu Biao's court also was a literary salon; moreover Handan Chun himself, before seeking protection under Cao's family, was active in Jingzhou where Liu Biao's court was.

[523] Liu Xie, in his "Ming shi" 明詩 chapter, acknowledges the source of *lihe* poetry in *tuchen* texts saying: "The origin of *lihe* poetry, is clearly found in *tuchen*" 離合之發，則明於圖讖; *WXDL* 2/6. 66.

[524] *YWLJ* 54. 1004. The text I am quoting is also based on the edition found in Lu Qinli's (1988, p. 196) *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nan Bei chao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩.

[525] This is a clear reference to *Chuci*'s poem "Yufu," the fisherman; in the tradition, an iconic figure for "the recluse."

與時進止，出寺弛張。

pursuing the opportunity, I advance and stop,

I abandoned the office,[526] [so I will] put into practice [the seclusion].

[*shi* 時 is the key-character, if *si* 寺 is "taken out" (*chu* 出), *ri* 日is left; then the two characters, previously obtained, combined (*he* 合) together result *lu* 魯.]

呂公磯釣，闔口渭旁;

The Duke Lü[527] went to fish on a rock near the water side,

he was in silence near the Wei river;

[*lü* 呂 is the key-character, *hekou* 闔口 literally means "to close the mouth," which means that one *kou* 口 is taken out; then, one *kou* 口is left.]

九域有聖，無土不王。

the nine regions still have the emperor,[528]

[but] there is no land without a king.[529]

[*yu* 域 is the key-character, *wu tu* 無土 literally is "without earth (*tu*)," so that *yu* becomes *huo* 或 ; combining *huo* with *kou*, we have then *guo* 國.]

好是正直，女回于匡;

Loving the upright and outspoken,[530]

you[531] are craft and evil, I am correct.

[*hao* 好 is the key-character, if *nü* 女 "goes back" (*hui* 回), then *zi* 子 is left.]

海外有乩，隼逝鷹揚。

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[526] *Si* 寺 here means *guanshe* 館舍, "the seat of administration" (Yi Jianxian, 2000, p. 14), so "chusi" 出寺 means "to be dismissed from the office." In the first verse, the image of the recluse, who is not involved in government affairs, echoes the poet present situation. He was, in fact, removed from the office (around 207).

[527] The Duke Lü is Lü Shang 呂尚, also called Jiang Taigong 姜太公. His original family name was Jian 姜. According to the tradition, at the end of the Shang dynasty he was living in seclusion because the King Zhou of Shang had lost the Way. King Wen of Zhou saw him on the south bank of the Wei River and asked him to take office. See *SJ* 32. 1477-1478. Kong Rong here compares himself with Lü Shang, but, in contrast to him, he can not "open the mouth" because his disrespectful way of talking offended the authority (Yi Jianxian, 2000, p. 15).

[528] At that time, Emperor Xian 献 (181–234) was still on the throne.

[529] It means that even if the Han emperor formally was still reigning, the war lords, in their spheres of influence, were already usurping his power.

[530] From the *Shijing*'s "Xiaoya" 小雅 section, "Xiao ming" 小明 poem. Zheng Xuan explains that it expresses the sigh of a King for his chaotic times. Here Kong Rong is referring to his own attitude; *Shj* p. 652, Zhou Zhenfu, 2002, p. 340.

[531] *Nü* stands for *ru* 汝.

outside there is good order,[532]

the falcon[533] leaves and the eagle arises.[534]

[𠂤乩 is the key-character, if *sun* 隼 "fades away, disappears" (*zhe* 逝), 乚 is left; combined with the previous character then we have *kong* 孔.]

六翮將奮，羽儀未彰;

Six feathers[535] are picked from the floor,

[but] the feathered ornament is still not evident.[536]

[*He* 翮 is the key-character, and if *yu* 羽 is "not evident" (*weizhang* 未彰), *ge* 鬲 is left.]

龍虵之蟄，俾也可忘。

the dragon[537] goes into hibernation,[538]

let me be forgotten.[539]

[*She* 虵 is the key-character, if *ye* 也 is "forgotten" (*wang* 忘), then *chong* 虫 is left. Combining it with *ge*, we have *rong* 融.]

玟璇隱曜，美玉韜光。

The precious and fine jade hides its brilliant light,

the beautiful jade conceals its preciousness.[540]

[*Min* 玟 is the key-character, if *yu*玉 "conceals" (*tao* 韜) itself, then *wen*文 is left.]

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[532] Lu Qinli states that *jie* 截, present in the *Yiwen leiju* version, has to be replaced by the character 𠂤, a graphic variant often used in Han's stele inscriptions; without this variant, it is not possible to understand the character hidden in the verse. In the commentary of the *Shijing*'s "Shang song" 商頌 section, at the "Changfa" 長發 poem *jie* 截, is glossed as *zhengqi* 整齐 "good order," and according to Zheng Xuan means "unified;" *Shj*, p. 1035, Zhou Zhenfa, 2002, p. 549. The poem is about Xiangtu 相土, the first king of Shang. *Haiwai* 海外, here indicated all the lands other than the kingdom territory. The poem praises Xiangtu; when he was in the government all the lands were in peace.

[533] *Sun* but also *zhui* 隹 (bird with a short tail; the falcon is a bird of such a kind).

[534] This image implies movement, the two birds are flying. This verse means that Kong Rong has to find the moment to act; Yi Jianxian, 2000, p. 15.

[535] *Liuhe* 六翮 are the feathers of the wings of big birds (*HSWZ* 6. 273). The feathers of the swan geese found on the floor can be picked up to compose ornaments.

[536] It means that the moral integrity of the recluse (feathers-the poet) could become an example of morality (ornaments) (Yi Jianxian, 2000, p. 16); but no one has recognized his value yet.

[537] *She* 虵is a variant for *she* 蛇.

[538] This is an echo from the *Yijing* 易經's "Wenyan" 文言 chapter, which says: "The inchworm curls his body just in order to go a step forward, the dragon goes in hibernation only to preserve his life" 尺蠖之屈，以求伸也；龍蛇之蟄，以存身也; Yi Jianxian, 2000, p. 16.

[539] Found in the *Shijing*'s "Beifeng" 邶風风, "Ri yue" 日月 poem, see *Shj* p. 73; Zhou Zhenfu, 2002, pp. 41-42.

[540] These two verses are used as images for reclusion from mundanity.

無名無譽，放言深藏;

[I am] without reputation, without honour,

I dismiss language[541] and don't show off;

[*Yu* 譽 is the key-character, if *yan* 言 is "dismissed" (*fang* 放) then *yu* 與is left.]

按轡安行，誰謂路長。

I rein in a horse when proceeding,[542]

who said that the road is long?[543]

[*An* 按 is the key-character, if *an* 安 "leaves" (*xing* 行), then *shou* 扌is left. Combining it with *yu*, we have *ju* 舉.]

On the first level of meaning, as it is given in the translation, this poem reworks the traditional topic of "the recluse." Since Qu Yuan's "Lisao" 離騷, "the recluse" was used as a literary *topos*, which personified the scholar who has been left out from the affairs of the government because his social attorney had failed to recognized his high morality and value. According to the content, Kong Rong must have composed it after he was discharged from his office (207–208 AD),[544] which followed his statement (one of the several he addressed against Cao Cao)[545] that it would be better for Cao Cao to leave the capital and go back to his fief.[546] However, on the second level of reading, the poem is a riddle, which engages the reader in a game of decoding. The solution is composed of six characters, which correspond to "Kong Rong, Wenju of Lu" 魯國孔融文舉, the name of the poet. This is the only Kong Rong's poem recorded by the *Yiwen leiju*, and one of the few left ascribed to the

[541] From *LY* 18/8. 197. The poet says that he avoids talking about government.

[542] This verse means that the poet restrains himself, his temperament.

[543] This last verse concludes the poem with the poet being optimistic about his future. He has an important duty to accomplish (to be a model of moral integrity) but he states that the "road" to undertake it is not long. There is an echo from the *Lunyu*: "Master Zeng said, 'A scholar-official must be strong and resolute, for his burden is heavy and his way (*dao*) is long. He takes up Goodness as his own personal burden—is it not heavy? His way ends only with death—is it not long?" 曾子曰："士不可以不弘毅，任重而道遠。仁以為己任，不亦重乎？死而後已，不亦遠乎？ *LY* 8/7. 80, trans. Slingerland, 2003, p. 80.

[544] Yi Jianxian, 2000, p. 14.

[545] Detailed accounts about Kong Rong's life can be found in the *Hanji* 漢紀's and *Weishi chunqiu* 魏氏春秋's passages quoted in the commentary of the *Sanguo zhi*, see *SGZ* 12. 371-372, n. 2.

[546] It is well known that Kong Rong never stopped expressing his opposition against Cao Cao's attempt to usurp the power of Han dynasty. He opposed Cao Cao's restriction on alcohol (*HHS* 70. 2272) and his idea to reinstate corporal punishment (*HHS* 70. 2266). His firm opposition and criticism toward Cao's ambition eventually cost him his life. Cao Cao, annoyed with his continuous remarks and criticism about his decisions and new rules, executed him and all his family in 208.

author.[547] No traditional critics praised his poetry. Liu Xie, in the *Wenxin diaolong*'s "Ming shi" 明詩 chapter, which traces the development of *shi* poetry genres, records the *lihe* poetry-style but does not acknowledge its origin to Kong Rong, who is never mentioned as a poet in the whole work. Zhong Rong 鐘嶸's (468–518 AD) *Shipin* 詩品, the first work of criticism exclusively dealing with five syllable poetry, does not include him at all. Even today scholar Donald Holzman, regarding the previously quoted poem, states: "The literary value of this extraordinary tour de force (called a *lihe*) is probably slight, as with most other poems attributed to Kong Rong." He quotes then few exceptions, in particular, one *yuefu* 樂府 poem, which describes in a moving way the sorrow of a father who had lost his son.[548] It seems then that the paradigm on which this poem has always been judged is focused on its content and the way in which the poet expresses it. Yi Jianxi, who has written one of the very few articles I was able to find about this piece, tries to rehabilitate the poem's literary merit. He first describes how well the author expressed his frustration and moral value; then he points out that the composition was written in the *siyan* 四言 (four characters) structure, that of *Shijing*'s poems, which is seen as a valued feature in a time where *wuyan* 五言 was the new and most fashionable verse form.[549]

I think, however, that both Holzman and Yi Jianxian's comments miss an important point. Kong Rong's craft is concerned with the structure of the poem, not with its content. It is obvious that his first aim was not to express his grief for being dismissed from the office, but to compose a playful poem manipulating the characters in order to better show off his literary skill. The meaning of the poem operates on two levels: a serious one, and a pleasing one. The outward serious content centring around the *topos* of "the recluse" is subordinate to the riddle-structure, which is the real *raison d'etre* of the entire composition. The literary skill

[547] There are seven poems ascribed to him, but actually only two can, without doubt, come from his brush: the here translated "Lihe shi" 離合詩 and "Linzhong shi" 臨終詩; see Yi Jianxian, 2000, p. 13.
[548] Holzman, 1986, p. 520.
[549] See Yi Jianxian 易健賢, 2000, "Kong Rong 'Lihe zuo jun xing ming zi shi' jiedu" 孔融《離合作郡姓名字詩》解讀, in *Guizhou jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao*, No. 6, pp. 13-17. It is interesting to highlight how, this modern scholar applies the same category of literary criticism found in traditional Chinese hermeneutic. The judgment which sees as a positive literary feature the evident link to *Shijing*'s type of poetry is expressed in the "Yiwenzhi" chapter, in the section dedicated to *shi* and *fu* poetry. Here, as I pointed out in the first chapter of this thesis, the compositions of Xunzi and Qu Yuan are praised because identified as related to *Shijing* tradition (*HS* 30.1756). This paradigm is reaffirmed by Liu Xie, who in *Wenxin diaolong*'s "Ming shi" chapter states that: "*siyan* is the orthodox style (for poetry), and is rooted in a correct and adorned beauty" 四言正體,雅潤為本; *WXDL* 2/6. 65.

of Kong Rong consists, then, on being able to play with language. Thus, he is a step ahead of Cai Yong. Cai Yong's eight characters inscription on the stele did not make sense unless deciphered. The words must be interpreted and the characters cut, merged and rearranged in order to obtain a meaning which makes sense. Conversely, the poem of Kong Rong presents a new aesthetics of double meaning and employment of riddles for aesthetic purposes.

As I previously mentioned, few poems of this author are left and he was rarely mentioned in works discussing poetry. However, the bibliographical chapter of the *Suishu* records a collection of his works in nine *juan*, in which poems must be included.[550] Moreover, Cao Pi in his *Dian Lun* 典論's "Lun wen" 論文 chapter ranked him among the Seven Masters of the Jian'an era (*Jian'an qizi* 建安七子).[551] The *Houhan shu* also records that Cao Pi gave a reward to anyone who was able to present him Kong Rong's works. In this way, he collected twenty-five *pian* of Kong's compositions, including poems, eulogies, stele inscriptions, prose, etc.[552] Therefore, it appears a little strange that he was considered such a bad poet not even worth to be mentioned. About Cao Pi's interest toward his father's enemy, Fusheng Wu remarks: "His treatment of Kong Rong is particularly noteworthy, because when he singled out Kong Rong's writing for praise in his aforementioned essay (the "Lun wen"), the latter had already been executed by his father for political reasons. This might further suggest that in his view, one's writing could be valued on its own merit, independent of one's political or moral stance. This was a radical step at the time, for since antiquity writing had been regarded as a manifestation of one's moral character."[553] Despite that, Cao Pi's judgment regarding Kong Rong's works was not completely positive. In the "Lun wen" he says:

> 孔融體氣高妙， 有過人者； 然不能持論， 理不勝詞， 以至乎雜以嘲戲。
> 及其時有所善， 楊、班儔。
> Kong Rong's mastery of form and the quality of Energy in his work is lofty and subtle, with something about it that surpasses everyone else. But he cannot

[550] *SS* 35. 1058.
[551] The others are Chen Lin 陳琳 (d. 217 AD), Wang Can 王粲 (177–217 AD), Xu Gan 徐幹 (170–217 AD), Ruan Yu 阮瑀 (?–212 AD), YingYang 應瑒 (?–217 AD), and Liu Zhen 劉楨 (?–217 AD); See *QSGW* 8. 1097.
[552] *HHS* 70. 2279.
[553] Wu 2008, pp. 39-40.

> sustain an argument, and the presentation of natural work is weaker than his command of diction—to the point that he sometimes includes playful spoofing. But at his best he rivals the Han writers Yang Xiong and Ban Gu.[554]

Cao Pi, even if he sees in Kong Rong an author who in some respect is better than the others (*guo ren* 過人), judges negatively his way of arguing his ideas. He states that Kong Rong "cannot sustain an argument" (*buneng chilun* 不能持論)[555] and apparently the reason is identified in Kong's employment of "playful spoofing" (*chaoxi* 嘲戲) when debating. Cao Pi is probably referring to Kong's compositions such as his letter addressed to Cao Cao about the new restriction on alcohol ("Nan Cao gong biao zhi jiu jin shu" 難曹公表制酒禁書).[556] Here Kong Rong sarcastically points out that Cao Cao wants to prohibit alcohol because he says that it could destroy a state; women could also have the same effect, so he asks if the next step could be to prohibit marriage.[557] This way of arguing by ridiculing the opponent is not appreciated by Cao Pi. Qian Zhongshu is one of the first scholars to state that Cao Pi actually made a mistake in his judgment. He failed to understand that *chaoxi* was the device employed by Kong Rong for his argumentation; his iconic and distinctive feature. Qian then compares and regards as alike Kong Rong words with those of the "Guji liezhuan"'s protagonists, who, by humorous speeches, veiled their admonishments.[558]

This time Qian is not quite correct. There is a difference between the "humour" of the *Shiji*'s characters which was used as a tool to remonstrate against the sovereign in order to advise him and make him change his wrong behaviour, and the kind of "humour" employed by Kong Rong. Kong Rong's humour could be classed as "sarcasm" which is defined as: a kind of hostile[559] or aggressive[560] "humour" which shows the "speaker's unsympathetic or hostile attitude"[561] and a sense of superiority towards his addressee. Kong Rong's primary aim, in fact, was to

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[554] *QSGW* 8. 1097; trans. Owen, 1997, p. 360.
[555] I would like to point out that this is the same judgment expressed by Ban Gu regarding Dongfang Shuo's mastery of language, which also shows a kind of "humour" in the exposition.
[556] *HHS* 70. 2272.
[557] This is also discussed in Lu Xun, 2004, p. 139.
[558] "嘲戲"乃其持論之方, 略類《史記,滑稽列傳》所載微詞譎諫耳。Qian Zhongshu, 1979, p. 1026.
[559] Ermida, 2008, p. 4.
[560] Raskin, 2008, p. 39.
[561] Ermida, 2008, p. 226.

criticize Cao Cao and to show him his opposition against his attempt to take power; but his words were certainly not meant as advice. He wanted to create a distance from Cao's hunger of power and expressed this in a disrespectful way. His persevering attitude eventually led him to be executed by his powerful opponent.

It seems to me, then, that a lack of hermeneutic discourse about the "humour" category in classical China generated misunderstanding and partiality toward those literary products which embedded it in different forms. As a result different kinds of works and figures (as possibly the "Guji liezhuan"'s anecdotes, Dongfang Shuo, then Kong Rong) were all grouped together and judged according to the same pattern.[562] Martin Kern, reflecting on "Yiwenzhi"'s treatment of *fu* poetry, and on the reason why it lacked a sustained discourse on matters of poetry and rhetoric among the Western Han elite, makes an interesting statement: "Early China differs decidedly from Mediterranean classical period. Nobody in pre-Han or Han China wrote anything even remotely comparable to Aristotle's *Peri poiētikēs* (On the art of poetry) […] or Cicero's *De Oratore* (On the Orator)." He then states: "One reason why there are no major early Chinese works on topics like rhetoric, grammar, and poetics might be that early China did not develop the professionalization and institutionalization of scholar-teachers, their disciplines, and their public arena in the way ancient Greece and Rome did."[563]

This is an interesting point because these two Mediterranean classical works not only talk about rhetoric and poetic in general; they also talk about "humour." The second book of Aristotle's *Peri poiētikēs*, which was focused on comedy, has been lost[564] but quotations and fragments show that Cicero in his discussion on humour in *De Oratore* (2. 216–90) used this tradition. Cicero's work is the first extant systematic analysis on the topic of "humour."[565] He understood "humour" as essential to the orator's art and distinguished it, first, between extended humour (*cavillatio*, humour employed profusely in the whole discourse) and immediate witticism (*dicacitas*, a caustic pun, sometimes also offensive). Then he contemplates

[562] As far as Kong Rong's way of arguing is concerned, Liu Xie, citing Kong Rong's "Xiaolian" 孝廉 (a work already lost) states that it is only made of "playful spoofing" (*chaoxi*). He evidently re-proposes the same judgment expressed by Cao Pi.
[563] Kern 2003b, p. 389, n. 15.
[564] However, Aristotle's analysis of jests and laughter can be found in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (4. 8); see Bremmer, 1997, pp. 20-21.
[565] For a survey of "humour" employed in rhetoric see: M. S. Celentano, 1995, "Comicità, umorismo e arte oratoria nella teoria retorica antica, in *Eikasmos*, No. 6, pp. 161-174.

humorous genres (*genera ridiculi*), which in turn are divided into two groups according to humour *re* (based on facts) and *dicto* (based on words).[566] Subsequently, Quintilian, greatly influenced by Cicero's work, dedicated to humour the entire third chapter of his *Institutio oratoria*.[567] These texts contributed to a systematization and a categorized arrangement of the textual materials, and greatly affected the subsequent literary hermeneutic.

In China, as Kern rightly pointed out, we do not find such a kind of tradition. Practice of "humours" employed in rhetoric did exist, as we have already demonstrated mentioning the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan," and Kong Rong's argumentations. "Humorous" writings, aimed to entertain, did exist as well, as we have shown quoting Mei Gao and Dongfang Shuo's *fu* and riddles, and Wei period compositions. However, the "humour" and "humorous" quality were not conceptualised in criticism. To find a literary critic on "humorous" texts we have to wait *Wenxin diaolong*'s "Xieyin" chapter (if there were other texts discussing humour before it, but I doubt it, they were unable to survive time and their supposed traces disappeared), which however we can not define as a categorization of textual materials. Liu Xie identifies in the quality of *xie* 諧 (humour–humorous) everything that is "expressed in an easy language that suits common people, and it is enjoyed by all,"[568] and only according to this quite broad feature he groups together different kinds of texts as folk songs, *fu* poetry, remonstrances, anecdotes, etc.[569] The result is, as has been demonstrated, that all these textual material is mixed together and classified basically according to one criterion that is: useful for the state (implying moral and didactic reading of the text) or useless (only entertaining).

Now returning to *yin*, the main topic of this part, Liu Xie makes a remark about Wei period stating that:

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[566] Elaine Fantham, in her *The Roman World of Cicero's De Oratore*, dedicates a chapter to Cicero's treatment of humour, see Fantham, 2004, pp. 186-208. See also Andreassi 2004, pp. 14-17.

[567] About Quintilian's treatment of humour see: T. Viljamaa, 1994, "Quintilian's theory of wit," in *Laughter down the Centuries*, S. Jäkel and A. Timonen (ed.), *Annales Universitatis Turkuensis*, Ser. B. Humaniora 208, Turku vol. 1, pp. 85-93.

[568] *WXDL* 3/15. 194.

[569] Compared to this, Sima Qian in his "Guji liezhuan" is more precise and accurate in presenting a definition of the term he used to title his chapter. He did not define what "guji" meant, but from the arrangement of the anecdotes, it is evident that he understood it as a rhetoric way (the "humorous" way) to express a remonstrance.

> 自魏代以來，頗非俳優，而君子嘲隱，化為謎語。謎也者，回互其辭，使昏迷也。或體目文字，或圖象品物，纖巧以弄思，淺察以衒辭，義欲婉而正，辭欲隱而顯。[…]至魏文、陳思，約而密之。高貴鄉公，博舉品物，雖有小巧，用乖遠大。觀夫古之為隱，理周要務，豈為童稚之戲謔，搏髀而忭笑哉！
>
> Since the time of Wei, jester like-texts and figures were quite rare. Instead men of culture played jokes with enigmas (*yin*),[570] and transformed them into riddles (*miyu*). A riddle is [a composition] whose words are so tortuous and circuitous that they lead [people] into a maze. Some riddles are based on the structure of characters, and some on the picturing and forms of things. With delicate artistic style they show creativity, and with simplicity and clarity they parade their ability with words; their meanings are indirect and yet correct, and their language is ambiguous and yet blunt. […] [The riddles by] Wen of Wei 魏文 (Cao Pi) and Chen Si 陳思 (Cao Zhi) are terse and close-knit; [those by] Gaogui *xianggong* 高貴鄉公 (Cao Mao)[571]are comprehensive in depicting objects but, while showing some cleverness, they miss the important point. Re-examining the enigmas of the ancients, their logic suits every important matter. When did they indulge in childish jokes, aiming at thigh-slapping merriment?[572]

Liu Xie, in this passage, describes the literary fashion in vogue during Wei period. As it appears evident, one kind of *miyu*-riddle (*ti mu wen zi* 體目文字, "riddles based on the structure of characters") coincides with the description that could be given of Cai Yong's riddling comment. This communication between members of the elite through a game of decoding is also attested in several anecdotes of the *Shishuo xinyu* (the episode regarding Cao E stele is one of this type).[573] The other kind of riddle (*tu xiang pin wu* 圖象品物, "picturing and forms of things") could refer to a type of *fu*

[570] According to Huang Shulin, the *chao* 嘲 character is absent in several editions, and here *yin* character is placed to better explain the definition of "riddle;" here the phrase does not mean "to ridicule enigma" (verb plus object). The phrase "since the time of Wei, jester like-texts and figures were quite rare" means that these humorous texts were replaced by riddle like texts. See *WXDL* 3/15. 203.

[571] He is Cao Mao曹髦, the nephew of Cao Pi. The riddles written by the three members of Cao family are all lost.

[572] *WXDL* 3/15. 195.

[573] See *SSXY* 11/1. 579, 11/ 2. 580, *SSXY* 24/4. 769-770.

poetry with a riddle-like content, first attested with Mei Gao,[574] but came to prominence in Wei period; maybe a kind of *yongwu* 詠物 poem, describing/depicting (*tu* 圖) a thing whose identity is taken secret until the end.[575] Sadly enough, of the above quoted compositions of Cao Pi, Cao Zhi and Cao Mao, nothing is left. Only later evidences of the genre are preserved,[576] which thus testify a constant interest in this kind of composition among scholars.

3. 3. Handan Chun - an expert calligrapher and skilful poet

3. 3. 1. Calligraphy

Cao E stele's inscription is the earliest historical record about Handan Chun, and it provides information about the first step of the scholar into the social life.

Then in early 190 Handan Chun was with the Han court in Chang'an, but in 191, as a result of the turmoil in north China, he took refuge in Jingzhou (modern Hubei)[577] at the court of Liu Biao 劉表 (?–208), which became an important literary salon and attracted several other scholars.[578] In 199, he wrote the funerary stele for Chen Ji 陳紀 (the "Han hulu Chen Ji bei" 漢鴻臚陳紀碑),[579] who died that same year.[580]

[574] Liu Xie actually does not cite Mei Gao concerning this type of riddle but *Xunzi*'s. Since the nature of *Xunzi*'s *fu* is still debated, I prefer to attest as a source for Wei *fu*-like riddles written for entertainment, Mei Gao's composition, whose aim was more clear. However it is true that the riddles found in the *Xunzi* have these literary features; see Knechtges, 1976, p. 18.

[575] This kind of composition is labelled also as *xiao sufu* 小俗賦 (small popular *fu*); see Liu Chujing, 2010, pp. 152-156, and Fu Junlian 伏俊璉, 2005, "Han Wei Liuchao de huixie yongwu sufu" 漢魏六朝的詼諧詠物俗賦, in *Lanzhou daxue xuebao*, Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 40-44. For the connection between *yongwu* poems and riddles see Zhou Fengwu, 1988, p. 403-405.

[576] For Bao Zhao 鮑照's (?414–466) three riddle-poems, see Huang Jie, 1957, p. 170.

[577] 初平時，從三輔客荊州。*SGZ* 21. 602, n. 1.

[578] Xiaofei Tian points out that, in contrast to what is traditionally claimed, the first works of Jian'an literature were not written under the patronage of the Caos, but at the court of Liu Biao; Tian Xiaofei, 2010, p. 168.

[579] *QSGW* 26. 1195-1196.

[580] Chen Ji lost his office during the Great Proscription (167–184), which took place during Emperor Ling's reign (r. 168–189), but in 188 was invited again at court to hold important offices. In 198, with Cao Cao, he worked at the proposal to restore mutilating punishments, which encountered the harsh criticism of Kong Rong. *HHS* 62. 2067-68. The *Shishuo xinyu* records several anecdotes about his

Chen Ji was an important figure at the time; the choice of making Handan Chun the one to compose his funerary inscription might imply that Handan had already established himself as a famous scholar among his contemporaries. In particular, his authorship of the two stele's inscriptions reveals his excellence in calligraphic art, which is also attested by the historical records. As far as his calligraphic skills are concerned, Wei Heng 衛恒's (d. 291) *Siti shushi* 四體書勢, quoted in the commentary of the *Sanguo zhi*, preserves a record which gives an interesting insight into Handan Chun's calligraphic mastery. The passage says as follows:

> 漢武帝時，魯恭王壞孔子宅，得尚書、春秋、論語、孝經，時人已不復知有古文，謂之科蚪書，漢世秘藏，希得見之。魏初傳古文者，出於邯鄲淳。敬侯寫淳尚書，後以示淳，而淳不別。至正始中，立三字石經，轉失淳法。因科蚪之名，遂效其法。太康元年，汲縣民盜發魏襄王冢，得策書十餘萬言。案敬侯所書，猶有仿佛。
>
> During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, Prince Gong of Lu had the residence of Confucius demolished, whereupon he discovered the *Shangshu*, *Chunqiu*, *Lunyu*, and *Xiaojing*. By then, people no longer had any knowledge of archaic script (*gu wen*), and so they called the writing 'tadpole script' (*kedou shu*).[581] Throughout the Han dynasty, these books were kept in a private collection, and it was only rarely that anyone saw them. At the beginning of the Wei dynasty, the [classics written in] archaic script were taught by Handan Chun. Jing Hou made a copy of Chun's *Shangshu*, and showed it to him. It was so good that not even Chun himself could distinguish between the original and the copy. When it came to erecting the stone stele with the classics written in three different scripts in Zhengshi period (240–248 AD), Chun's method was already lost. So, to match the script-name, the script was designed to resemble tadpoles (*kedou*). During the first year of Taikang reign date (280), people of Jixian plundered the tomb of King Xiang of Wei dynasty and discovered bamboo slips containing over 100.000 characters. The script was similar to Jing Hou's writing."[582]

The record informs that Handan Chun was an expert of a kind of script, which imitated the style found in the ancient manuscript discovered in Han times. This

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cleverness: *SSXY* 1/6. 7, 1/8. 11, 1/10. 12, 2/6. 59, 3/3. 165, 5/1. 279, 9/6. 505-506, 10/3. 549, 12/1. 587.

[581] Written also as *kedou* 科斗, without the "insect" (*chong* 虫) radical.

[582] *SGZ* 21. 621, n. 2; trans. with slight changes, Qi Gong, 2004, p. 29.

style, defined as "ancient script," was called by Han scholars "tadpole script." 'Jing Hou' was another name for Wei Ji 衛覬 (active ca. 220–226 AD), a calligrapher who was a student of masters who had studied with Cai Yong. He wrote a first draft of the *Siti shushi*, which then was completed by Wei Heng, his grandson. The record states that Wei Ji had learned Handan's way of writing so well that Handan Chun was not able to tell the difference between Wei's and his own writing.[583] Then, it states that Handan Chun's method of calligraphy (*chun fa* 淳法) during the Zhengshi era was already lost, so the "tadpole script" of Handan Chun was recreated without being able to see his original compositions.[584] As Qi Gong points out, this record shows that those who mastered calligraphy had an individual hand writing style. Handan Chun has, in fact, his own personal style or "method of calligraphy" which was imitated by other scholars. This brief passage also elucidates that variations of style occurred when manuscripts were copied and transmitted. During the Zhengshi era, in fact, the scholars tried to recreate Handan Chun's "tadpole" calligraphic style but because no original composition was preserved, they created another kind of "tadpole" script, which however, according to Qi Gong, was not an innovation. It was still based on the 'brush-writing' tradition which Handan's style was part of.[585]

From the *Weilue*'s passage, quoted in the commentary of the *Sanguo zhi* (at the biography of Wang Can), it is known that Handan Chun "was familiar with the *cangya*, the *chongzhuan* (worm seal script), and Mr. Xu's dictionary."[586] Qi Gong states that the "worm-seal script" could refer "to the same archaic script once copied by Wei Ji, that is, the 'archaic script' in the Stone Classics of the Zhengshi period,

[583] Regarding this passage Robert E. Harris Jr. states that: "This account does not quite make clear whether or not Wei Ji was attempting to fool Handan Chun or was merely showing off his prowess as a calligrapher;" Harris, 2004, p. 51, n. 3. But actually I do not see why Wei Ji could make up such a kind of joke. It seems clear to me that he was showing to Handan his ability in being able to reproduce Handan's *guwen* style (which might be very famous and praised at that time). Instead it is possible to see a real joke made up by a scholar using his calligraphic skill in the *Shishuo xinyu*, see *SSXY* 21/4. 718.

[584] Some scholars misunderstood this passage and thought that Handan Chun drafted the stele's inscription during Zhengshi period, but Lu Kanru (1985, p. 441) states that this is not possible. Handan Chun could not have been alive during Zhengshi period.

[585] Qi Gong, 2004, p. 30.

[586] *SGZ* 21. 603, n. 1. Trans. Qi Gong 2004, p. 36. This is the translation given in Qi Gong's article, but all the editions of the *Sanguo zhi* I have consulted pose a comma after *cang*, and *ya* and from *chong* and *zhuan* like 蒼`雅`蟲`篆`許氏字. I did not find further explanation of this passage. The *Hanshu*'s "Yiwenzhi" contains a section dedicated to the *xiaoxue* (minor learning), a category in which calligraphy was ascribed. The section records several texts in which "Can Jie" name is present so I suppose that they contained references to calligraphy (Cang Jie is the legendary inventor of Chinese characters), see *HS* 30. 1720. "Mr Xu's text" is the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, written by Xu Shen 許慎.

which he describes as having 'lost [Handan] Chun's methods.' In other words, worm-seal script refers to handwritten archaic script, and tadpole script is another name for worm (bird)-seal script."[587] As we have seen in the first chapter of this thesis, the "worm seal script" is the same script in which the scholars of Hongdu Gate academy excelled. According to this evidence, we can say it was in fashion during the end of the Later Han period and the scholars who mastered it were very appreciated. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the passages of the *Houhan shu*, which introduces Emperor Ling's cultural interests, and the memorials written by the traditional scholars Cai Yong, Yang Qiu, and Yang Ci against the Hongdu Gate Academy,[588] all refer to bird-worm seal script as a kind of calligraphic art. They did not discuss its written content. This is quite revealing as it shows that the judgment about the quality of the script was a question of artistic style.[589] Handan Chun, as did the Hongdu Gate's scholars, mastered this calligraphic art. He really was a representative figure of the Jian'an period.[590]

3. 3. 2. Poetry and games

In 208 Cao Cao, who already in 193 was the supreme military power in northern China (and had took Emperor Xian 獻, r. 189–220, under his "protection" in 196) went to Jingzhou. Liu Biao's son, Liu Cong 劉琮 surrendered. Cao Cao, once there, heard about the fame of Handan Chun and had an audience with him.[591] In 211 Cao Pi, who at the time was vice-counsellor in chief (*fu chengxiang* 副丞相), invited Handan Chun to join his court in Ye. In 216 he was sent by Cao Cao to Linzi 臨淄[592] to visit Cao Zhi, who held the position of Linzi's marquis.[593] Their first meeting is recorded in the *Weilüe*'s passage, which is the key point of the first chapter of this

[587] Qi Gong, 2004, p. 36.
[588] See Chapter 1. 3.
[589] The *Siti*'s passage, regarding the stone stele of Zhengshi era, describes as a problem the loss of Handan's calligraphic style. This detail shows that the inscription of the stele required not only a content but also an appropriate appearance. Its function then was different from the bamboo and wood slips and needed different artistic requirements; see Qi Gong 2004, p. 31.
[590] Zhang Yaxin, 1985, p. 34.
[591] *SGZ* 21. 603, n. 1. Lu Kanru, 1985, p. 365.
[592] Northwest of modern Linzi, Shandong.
[593] Cao Zhi became marquis of Linzi in 214; Lu Kanru, 1985, p. 396.

thesis.[594] Cao Zhi's mastering of all the skills and arts representative of educated elite, amazed Handan Chun, who, once back in Ye, praised him with Cao Pi. Cao Pi was not happy about this.[595] Rafe de Crespigny says that this event probably is the reason why Cao Pi did not rank Handan Chun with the Seven Masters of Jian'an era in his *Dian Lun*.[596]

In the first year of Emperor Wen of Wei's (Cao Pi) reign (220) he became an imperial appointed erudite (*boshi* 博士) with the position of *jishizhong* 給事中 (a kind of imperial adviser).[597] Obliged to definitely leave Linzi to take office in Luoyang, he wrote the "Zeng Wu Chuxuan shi" 贈吳處玄詩[598] (also called "Dazeng shi" 答贈詩).[599] From the content of the composition it is possible to know that he is sending this poem in return to that written by Wu Chuxuan 吳處玄.[600] Wu Chuxuan probably was an attendant like him at Cao Zhi's court, but there are no other records about his figure elsewhere. The poem is a source of historical information. It testifies the exactness of the *Weilüe*'s records about Handan Chun's life,[601] saying: "I received the order to come to Linzi" 我受上命。來隨臨菑. It also confirms that he is writing it in a period in which Cao Pi had already taken power, becoming the new Emperor, as it says in one passage: "The Sovereign received the mandate" 圣主受命.[602] The other three extant compositions are of the same year, which are preserved in Yan Kejun's *Quan Sangguo Wen* 全三國文.[603] The first is the memorial addressed to the new Emperor (Cao Pi), the "Shang shouming shubiao" 上受命述表, which announces his other composition, the "Shouming shu" 受命述 (Receiving the

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[594] See Chapter 1, 1. 4.
[595] All this information is recorded in the same passage quoted by the *Weilüe*, in *Sanguo zhi*'s commentary; see *SGZ* 21. 603, n. 1.
[596] De Crespigny, 2007, p. 306. However, I think that this is only a supposition and there are no records and proofs to demonstrate this.
[597] Hucker (1985, p. 133): Originally – Palace Steward –, "in Han became a supplementary honorific designation for variable numbers of eminent court officials. […] Since the title literally suggests one who provides service in the palace, it carried the implication that its bearer was worthy companion and mentor of the Emperor."
[598] It is contained in Lu Qinli, 1988, p. 409. About this poem see also: Zhang Yaxin, 1985, p. 35.
[599] *YWLJ* 31. 546.
[600] One passage says: "Seeing me off at the corner of the road, you gave me graceful words" 餞我路隅, 贈我嘉辭. The poem has as an alternative title "Dazeng shi" 答贈詩, or "answering back" (*da*) to a poem previously received (*zeng*).
[601] "Taizu [Cao Cao] sent Chun to visit Zhi" 太祖遣淳詣植, *SGZ* 21. 603, n. 1.
[602] See also Lu Kanru, 1985, p. 424; Zhang Yaxin, 1985, p. 35.
[603] Yan Kejun, in total, grouped five pieces ascribed to Handan Chun, the "touhu fu" 投壺賦, the "Shang shouming shubiao" 上受命述表, the "Shouming shu" 受命述, the "Han Honglu Chen Ji bei" 漢鴻臚陳紀碑, and the "Xiaonü Cao E bei" 孝女曹娥碑; see *QSGW* 26. 1195-1197.

mandate),[604] in which the poet eulogises the virtue of the new dynasty.[605] The third piece is the "Touhu fu" 投壺賦 depicting a popular social game. We will discuss it in some detail.

3. 3. 2. 1. Poetry and social games

The *touhu* (pitch-pot) was a traditional game played by the elite during the banquets. The object of the game consisted of throwing bamboo or wooden sticks into the mouth of a vessel. For every errant throw, the loser was assessed a penalty drink. This game has an ancient origin. The *Liji* 禮記, compiled in early Han, dedicates one chapter to the *touhu*.**[606]** In this chapter it seems that the game evolved from archery and was inscribed in a ritual framework: the proper behaviour of the player could let him gain more points than a successful throw. Therefore, the game was seen as a form of ritual propriety (*li*) which would teach proper behaviour and moral conduct.**[607]** However, in one of the anecdotes of the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan," we find an already less formal description of the atmosphere in which the game was involved. Sima Qian's record says that King Wei of Chu, setting a banquet, asked Chunyu Kun how many cups of wine would it take to make him drunk. Chunyu Kun answered describing various banquet scenes (formal and informal), and in one passage said:

> 若乃州閭之會，男女雜坐，行酒稽留，六博投壺，相引為曹，握手無罰，
> 目眙不禁，前有墮珥，后有遺簪，髡竊樂此，飲可八斗而醉二參。

[604] Both at *QSGW* 26. 1195.
[605] Liu Xie quotes the "Shouming shu" in his *Wenxin diaolong*'s "Feng shan" 封禪 chapter, regarding it as similar to those texts written to celebrate *feng shan* solemn sacrifices. He defines it then as similar to those texts which eulogise the accomplishment of the imperial dynasty; see *WXDL* 5/21. 296. Cao Zhi appreciated Handan's composition and rewarded him of forty pieces of silk, as it is attested in his "Da Handan Chun shang shouming shu zhao" 答邯鄲淳上受命述詔, *QSGW* 5. 1077.
[606] *LJ* 58/40. 1565-1576.
[607] See Dien 2007, p. 385. The game is described in: Gösta Montell, 1940, "T'ou-hu –the Ancient Chinese Pitch-pot Game," in *Ethnos*, Vol. 5, No. 1-2, pp. 70-83 (this article analyses literary sources); Richard C. Rudolph, 1950, "The antiquity of *t'ou hu*," in *Antiquity*, No. 24, pp. 175-178 (it concerns archaeological and historical sources).

> In country fairs[608] where men and women sit together and the wine goes round and round, we play *liubo*[609] or *touhu*, choosing our own patterns, and there is no punishment for holding hands and no taboo for looking into each other's eyes. First the women's earrings start to drop, then [men's] hairpins are lost. At that time I secretly rejoice and I can drink eight *dou* and be barely one-third tipsy.[610]

The atmosphere described is an informal one. Men and women sit together, leisurely indulging in drinking and playing society games and dallying. No formality of court etiquette seems involved; on the contrary, the scene presented shows a moment in which that formality is suspended. But it was during the Later Han Wei period that *tohu*, along with other social games, became very popular among the educated elite as social entertainment.[611] The same context, which allowed the creation of literary humorous pieces shared during conversation between scholars, or entertaining riddle poems, which were tasks to solve to shows one's erudition, made possible the appearance of poetic compositions centred on social games. Handan Chun's "touhu fu" is one of such a kind, and the first recorded about the *touhu*. The passage of the *Weilüe* about Handan Chun's life, already quoted several times, records that in 220 Handan wrote the poem, which consisted of more than one thousand characters, and presented it to Cao Pi. Cao Pi liked it and rewarded him with one thousand pieces of silk.[612] The *fu*, preserved in the *Yiwen leiju*,[613] of which now only 389 characters are left, is a detailed description of the game. It describes the objects used[614] and the practical setting of the game.[615] The variety of details about the objects employed

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[608] I was not able to find further evidence about the "country-fair." I think that here it is not described a scene during a fair which sees countryside populace involved. It must be a banquet held by elite members who live in sub-urban places. This social event would deserve further investigation.

[609] *Liubo* 六博 is an ancient game: two people play, there are 12 chessmen, 6 white and 6 black, every player has 6 chessmen, therefore the name.

[610] *SJ* 126. 3199.

[611] Zhu Dawei, 1998, p. 405-406; Ru An, 2009, p. 23.

[612]及黃初初，以淳為博士，給事中。淳作《投壺賦》千餘言，奏之，文帝以為　工，賜帛千匹; *SGZ* 21. 603, n. 1.

[613] *YWLJ* 74. 1279; it is also collected by Yan Kejun, see *QSGW* 26. 1195.

[614] As for example it informs that the vase might be tall two *chi*, with a large belly and a thinner neck 厥高二尺，盤腹修頸, *YWLJ* 74. 1279.

[615] The vase must be placed seven *chi* distant from the guests, the judge (called *sishe* 司射) guides the game, and the aim is to throw the arrows inside the vase (距筵七 尺, [...] 司射是職, [...] 應壺順入，何其善也). The poem also quotes several ways to play it and a technique to throw the arrow called *xiao* 驍, which, according to the tradition, was introduced by the attendant Guo, in Western Han times. The *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 (*TPYL* 753. 3343) records that the attendant Guo changed the material of the arrow from wood to bamboo in order to increase its elasticity. The result was that it was possible to throw the arrow inside the vase and make it come out; Zhu Dawei, 1998,

and the numerous ways presented to play it show the increasing interest toward the *touhu* and the great creativity applied to improve it. But most importantly, they show that the original didactic rituality has been completely replaced by the pursuit of new ways to achieve entertainment and amusement. This joyful social atmosphere is clearly depicted at the end of the poem where Handan says: "Happily we sit, seeing and hearing, all hearts are full of joy, and [we are pleased] without getting tired" 悦舉坐之耳 目，樂眾心而不倦.

The same chapter of the *Yiwen leiju* which contains Handan Chun's *fu* about *touhu* also preserves several poetic compositions about other social games, all ascribed to writers of later Han to Jin period. Some are dedicated to the *weiqi* 圍棋 (encirclement chess),[616] a board game similar to western chess, for example Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166),[617] Cao Shu 曹攄 (late 3th century), and Cai Gong 蔡洪 (late 3th century), each wrote a "Weiqi fu" 圍棋賦.[618] Other *fu* are dedicated to the *tanqi* 彈棋 (pellet chess), for example Cai Yong, Cao Pi,[619] and Ding Yi 丁廙 (?–220) each wrote a "Tanqi fu" 彈棋賦.[620] Ma Rong also wrote a *fu* about the *shupu* 樗蒲,[621] a gambling game, which appeared in Later Han times, but which increased in popularity during Wei-Jin period.[622] The reason why social games could attire the interest of scholars to the point of becoming the subject of their poetic compositions, it is not only due to the popularity achieved by their entertaining nature. The other

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pp. 405-406, Ru An, 2009, p. 33. However, this text, which is a miscellanea of anecdotes relating events of Former Han times, is a questionable source. Its exact date of compilation is unknown, but it could be around the fifth century, Knechtges, 1976, p. 10.

[616] This game, unlike *touhu*, "relies entirely on mental activity, and this explains why it came to be held in such high esteem among the scholars," Dien, 2007, p. 384. Ban Gu wrote the *Yizhi* 弈旨 (explanation of *go*, another name for *weiqi*), also contained in the *Yiwen leiju*. *YWLJ* 74. 1273. See also the description of the game in Ning Jiayu, 1992, 273-275; Zhu Dawei, 1998, 408-415. See also Li Zhaocheng 李兆成, 2001, "Mantan Wei Jin shi de weiqi" 漫談魏晉時的圍棋, in *Sichuan wenwu*, No. 3, pp. 37-39.

[617] In the *Wenxuan*, this "weiqi fu" is ascribed to Liu Xiang, see Knechtges, 1976, p. 43, and 127, n. 120.

[618] *YWLJ* 74. 1271.

[619] Cao Pi was famous for being an able player of this game. The *Shishuo xinyu* records: "The game of pellet chess (*tanqi*) began from within the palace during the Wei Kingdom, where they used powder boxes to play. Emperor Wen (Cao Pi) was especially subtle at this game, and using the corner of his handkerchief to flip the playing pieces, never missed a shot;" *SSXY* 21/1. 712, trans. Mather, 2002, p. 390. Zhu Dawei states the first *Shishuo xinyu*'s assumption is wrong. The game was already in fashion during Han times, and especially at the court of Emperor Wu. Once again, the key figure is Dongfang Shuo, who introduced it to the Emperor; see Zhu Dawei 1998, pp. 396-397.

[620] *YWLJ* 74. 1275. See Zhu Dawei, 1998, pp. 396-400; Ning Jiayu, 1992, pp. 278-279.

[621] The "Shupu fu" 樗蒲賦, *YWLJ* 74. 1278.

[622] In contrast to games such as *touhu* and the *weiqi*, *shupu* does not depend on the player's skill or intelligence, but only on fortune. See Ning Jiayu, 1992, pp. 275-278; Zhu Dawei 1998, pp. 391-396. Zhu states that this game also involved some skills (1998, p. 398).

reason can be better understood if we read the *Shishuo xinyu*. Chapter twenty-one, "Qiao Yi" 巧藝 (skill and art),[623] according to Qian Nanxiu, is part of the chapters which codify the *cai* (skill) appreciated by the new ruling elite.[624] In this chapter's anecdotes the members of the educated elite are described according to what *Shishuo*, so as to say Wei-Jin society, acknowledges as "skills," which are: painting skill,[625] calligraphy,[626] archery, but also the ability to play social games.[627] See for example the following anecdote:

> 羊長和博學工書，能騎射，善圍棊。諸羊後多知書，而射、弈餘藝莫逮。
> Yang Zhanghe[628] was comprehensive in his learning and a master at calligraphy. In addition he was an able horseman, and archer and a good hand at encirclement chess (*weiqi*). The Yangs in later years were mostly expert calligraphers, but in archery and chess and the other arts no one ever equalled Zhanghe.[629]

The *Shishuo* praises Yang Chen for the different kinds of skills he was good at: calligraphy, horse riding, archery, but also playing *weiqi*. The members of his family were equally good in calligraphy, but the fact that they were not like him in playing chess is seen as a deficiency of virtue, making them less talented than him. In this case, Yang Chen mastered the *weiqi*, possibly one of the most famous games at the time. The *Shishuo xinyu*, in the same chapter, records an anecdote focused on this game; it says as follows:

> 王中郎以圍棊是坐隱，支公以圍棊為手談。

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[623] Qian Nanxiu (2001, p. 5) translates it as "ingenious arts," but I prefer Mather's (2002, p. 390) translation.
[624] The other chapters are: "Yanyu" 言語 (Speech and conversation) *SSXY* 2. 55, "Zheng shi" 政事 (Affairs of the government) *SSXY* 3. 163, "Wenxue" 文學 (Literature and scholarship) *SSXY* 4. 1889, "Shijian" 識鑒 (Recognition and judgment [of human character types]) *SSXY* 7. 382, "Shangyu" 賞譽 (Appreciation and praise [of personalities]) *SSXY* 8. 413, "Pincao" 品藻 (Ranking [personalities] with refined words) *SSXY* 9. 499, "Shujian" 術解 (Technical understanding) *SSXY* 20. 703; See Qian Nanxiu, 2002, pp. 35-36.
[625] *SSXY* 21/ 4. 718, 6. 719, 7. 719, 8. 720, 9. 720, 11. 721, 12. 722, 13. 722, 14. 722.
[626] *SSXY* 21/3. 716, 4. 718, 5. 719.
[627] *SSXY* 21/1. 712, 5. 719, 10. 720.
[628] Zhanghe is the courtesy name of Yang Chen羊忱 (late 3rd century-early 4th century), a man from Taishannan (located in today Shandong), he was killed during the disorder of Yongjia era (307–312).
[629] *SSXY* 21/5. 719, trans. with slightly changes, Mather, 2002, pp. 391-393.

> Wang Danzhi[630] considered the game of encirclement chess (*weiqi*) a kind of "sedentary retirement" (*zuoyin*), while the monk Zhi Dun considered it "manual conversation" (*shoutan*).[631]

Wang Tanzhi 王坦之 (330–375 AD) compared the manner acquired by the player during a *weiqi*'s match (lost in thought with an emotionless facial expression) to the practice of meditation of a recluse. This means that during a *weiqi*'s match, the scholar's state of mind, like that of the recluse, could transcend that of the ordinary man.[632] Zhi Dun 支遁 (314–366 AD), instead, thought of the game as a way to talk with his opponents,[633] so as to say that the *weiqi* is a way to lead a "pure conversation" (*qingtan* 清談). To be good at playing *weiqi* does not only show one's skill; it also makes manifest one's wisdom. Moreover, to "live in seclusion" and the practice of "pure conversation" were two life-styles held in high esteem during Wei-Jin period; to compare the *weiqi* to them shows its important implication for the society of the time.[634] These games, then, are not only entertaining activities, rather they also have a social implication; they are categories according to which members of the educated elite are judged by their pairs. Furthermore, they are a valued feature which constitutes part of a scholar self-fashion; they can characterize a man in a positive way.

As far as the *weiqi* is concerned, during Wei Jin period the skill in playing it was judged according to nine ranks.[635] The *Shuofu* 說郛,[636] at the *juan* 102, quotes a passage from a text called "Qijing" 棋經, which is ascribed to Handan Chun, and in which is illustrated this nine-rank division.[637] Actually, the commentary of the

[630] Literally: "The military officer (*zhonglang)* Wang."
[631] *SSXY* 21/10. 720; trans. Mather 2002, p. 394.
[632] Luo Yuming, 2007, p. 143.
[633] The *Shishuo xinyu*'s commentary quotes a passage from the *Yulin* 語林. Here it is recorded that, when Zhi Dun was observing the mourning, he played the *weiqi* with the guests, who were visiting him; *SSXY* 21/10. 720.
[634] Luo Yuming, 2007, p. 143.
[635] According to Zhu Dawei (1998, p. 411) this innovation could have been inspired by the introduction of the "nine-rank system" (*jiu pin guanren fa* 九品官人法) a civil service nomination system appeared for the first time in Wei period.
[636] A collectanea compiled by Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (preface dated 1370). It contains mainly *biji* 筆記 from earliest times to the sixteenth century.
[637] See Zhu Dawei, 1998, p. 411-412.

Wenxuan quotes several times a *Yijing* 藝經 ascribed to Handan Chun.[638] However, not the *Yiwen leiju*, nor the *Taiping yulan* attribute the text to him. The bibliographical chapter of the *Suishu* records, in the section dedicated to the collections (*ji* 集), a "Handan Chun ji" 邯鄲淳集 in two *juan*,[639] but the collection is lost. Until the present, the lacking of textual material leaves us unable to make a statement whether this *Yijing* text could or not be ascribed to Handan Chun.

3. 4. Handan Chun and the *Xiaolin*

The *Weilüe* then records that in 221 AD, Handan Chun mended the *Shijing* 石經.[640] After this, no other historical records regarding Handan Chun deeds can be found; moreover, Handan could possibly be about ninety years old. Lu Kanru, therefore, seems to side towards the possibility that Handan could have died circa this date.[641] However, traditionally, the date of his death is attested to be around 225 AD.[642]

According to the few historical fragments about Handan Chun's life that we are able to collect, it appears that he was an important scholar of the time. He was defined as "widely learned and well versed in literary composition" (*boxue you caizhang* 博學有才章).[643] He was a master of calligraphy and a poet.[644] However, the *Xiaolin* 笑林 (Forest of laughs) is the work by which he left his name in the history of Chinese literature.[645] The *Xiaolin* is recorded for the first time in the *Suishu*'s "Jingji zhi" (Bibliographical chapter) where it is ascribed to Handan Chu, who is said to hold the *jishizhong* office during Later Han times.[646]

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[638] See for example the comment to one passage of Cao Zhi's "Baima fu" 白馬賦, which talks about the "black hoof" (*xuanti* 玄蹄), a target employed during archery games, *WX* 14. 626, Knechtges, 1996, p. 70.
[639] *SS* 35. 1059.
[640] *SGZ* 13. 420, n. 3; Lu Kan ru, 1985, p. 441.
[641] Lu Kanru, 1985, p. 441.
[642] Tian Xiaofei, 2010, p. 168; Harrist, 2004, p. 51, n. 3; Knechtges, 2010, p. 34.
[643] *SGZ* 21. 602.
[644] Xiaofei Tian defines Handan Chun as "a leading authority on various types of script, and perhaps second only to Cai Yong as a writer of grave inscriptions;" Tian, Xiaofei, 2010, p. 168.
[645] This is the opinion of all the scholars researching on Chinese literature; see Zhang Yaxin, 1985, p. 35; Gu Nong, 2000, p. 77.
[646] *SS* 34. 1011.

As far as the date of composition is concerned, there are no historical records which could testify it and scholars differ in their opinions. Hou Zhongyi, quoting the *Wenxin diaolong*'s passage of the "Xieyin" chapter which talks about a "comic book" (*xiaoshu* 笑書),[647] states that whether this book was Handan Chun's *Xiaolin* or Emperor Wen (Cao Pi)'s text, its date of composition must be around 221 AD.[648] As we have previously seen, the historical records about this author's life stop in 221 and do not mention the *Xiaolin*. Then, if this is taken as a reliable date for the composition of the text, some anecdotes ascribed to Handan Chun's *Xiaolin* could raise a dating problem. In particular, the story concerning Zhang Wen 張溫, an official of the state of Wu 吳, active at the beginning of the third century. I already quoted this anecdote in its entirety in the second chapter of this thesis,[649] hence here I recall only the problematic passage:

> 張溫使蜀　When Zhang Wen was about to leave for a diplomatic mission to Shu […][650]

According to the *Sanguo zhi*, Zhang Wen was sent to Shu in 224.[651] Contemporary scholar Xu Kechao, in analysing this problem, starts quoting Yu Jiaxi's comment about this story, which is contained in his "Shi cang Chu" 釋傖楚 (Explaining 'the barbarian man of Chu'). Yu Jiaxi states: "The story of Zhang Wen going to Shu was not something Handan Chun could know."[652] Xu Kechao uses Yu Jiaxi's opinion to pose a problem: if Handan Chun died around the beginning of the Huangchu era, how could he have known about the diplomatic mission of Zhang Wen, which happened in 224? At that time Handan Chun maybe was already dead.[653] But Xu Kechao affirms that not only was he alive in 224 but was probably alive also in 240 AD.[654] To state this, he discharges Handan's authorship of Cao E inscription, stating

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[647] *WXDL* 3/15. 194.
[648] Hou Zhongyi, 1992, p. 64. Wang Liqi (1980, p. 104, n. 7), supposes that the "comic book" stands for Handan Chun's *Xiaolin*, and that he composed it for Cao Pi, who was already the Emperor. Following this statement Handan must have collected the material for his text in his late age. About this *Wenxin diaolong*'s passage see Chapter 1. 4. He Shihai (2009, p. 72) states that the conversation that Handan exchanged with Cao Zhi (SGZ 21. 603, n. 1) inspired him to compose the *Xiaolin*.
[649] See Chapther 2. 2.
[650] *YWLJ* 85.1463, *TPYL* 820.3651, *XTZ* 4.84.
[651] *SGZ* 12. 1329-33.
[652] Yu Jiaxi, 1997, p. 211.
[653] Xu Kechao, 2006, p. 61.
[654] Xu Kechao, 2006, p. 62.

that the Handan Zili,[655] recorded by the *Kuaiji dianlu*, and probably born around 130 AD, is not the Handan who wrote the *Xiaolin*. To strengthen his hypothesis, he then points out that the *Sanguo zhi* lists Handan Chun together with Lu Cui 路粹,[656] Ding Yi 丁儀 and Ding Yi 丁廙,[657] and the *Weilüe* identifies him, along with Su Lin 蘇林, Yue Xiang 樂詳 and others, as one of the Seven Confucian Exemplars (*ruzong* 儒宗).[658] All these men, Xu says, at the beginning of Huangchu era were forty to sixty years old. Handan Chun was maybe older, but he could not be more than seventy years old.[659] Therefore, he could have had the chance to know about Zhang Wen's mission.

When attempting to pinpoint the dating of Handan Chun's life and his writings, another question naturally arises, (which actually is the main topic of Yu Jiaxi's article); the issue of authenticity of all the anecdotes in the *Xiaolin*, as it is known today. Handan Chun was a man who first served the Han and then flew to Wei. He never went to Wu. However, several stories of the *Xiaolin* involve details concerning the state of Wu. Regarding the story previously quoted, and the doubt raised by Yu Jiaxi, Xu Kechao states that even if Handan Chun never went to Wu, he could have heard about Zhang Wen deeds, thus recording them. He does not regard the "Wu-theme" as a problem of attribution.

Yu Jiaxi, instead, when he says that Zhang Wen's story "was not something Handan Chun could know," is not raising a dating problem. He does not believe that in a text compiled by a man of Wei there could be a direct reference to facts which happened in Wu. Yu Jiaxi also questions several other stories ascribed to Handan's *Xiaolin*, which contain details related to the state of Wu. He starts his analysis quoting a passage from the *Jinyangqiu* 晉陽秋,[660] which says: "The people of Wu called those of the Central Plain as *cang* 傖." Then, he quotes a passage from the

[655] Zili, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, is one of the courtesy names attributed to Handan Chun, Chapter 3. 1.
[656] He died in 219, but because was executed by Cao Cao.
[657] The Ding brothers both died in 220. Cao Cao wanted to marry Ding Yi 丁儀 to one of his daughters. Cao Pi opposed this idea, since then Ding Yi held a resentement against Cao Pi. Cao Pi knew this, once he took the power, executed him and his younger brother. *SGZ* 19. 561-62. De Crespigny 2007, pp. 143-144.
[658] The Seven Confucian Exemplars were regarded as those who maintained the tradition of Han scholarship in time of disorder; *SGZ* 13. 420, n. 3.
[659] Xu Kechao, 2006, p. 62.
[660] This text, composed of 32 *juan*, was ascribed to Sun Cheng 孫盛 (?302–374 AD). Today is lost, but its passages can be found in the commentary to the *Shishuo xinyu*, and in Pei Songzhi's commentary to the *Sanguozhi*.

juan 8 of the *Leipian* 類篇[661] in which it is said that the word *cang* means "to create confusion" (*cangruang* 傖攘), which was also a way to indicate a "vulgar fellow." Yu Jiaxi, accordingly, states that in origin the word *cang* did not have a geographical connotation, and it just meant "vulgar."[662] Yu attributes the shift of meaning from simply "vulgar" to "northern vulgar fellow" to the famous brothers Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303 AD) and Lu Yun 陸雲 (262–303 AD). They were two talented men–poets and literary critics, as well as courtiers and politicians from the state of Wu, who after arriving in Luoyang (289), found some difficulties in adapting themselves to the different mores of the northern people.[663] Therefore, they used the word *cang* to refer to the people in the north, who in the eyes of the sophisticated southerners were vulgar.[664] If it is true that the word *cang* started to mean "northern vulgar fellow" only at the end of the 3rd-beginning of 4th century, then those *Xiaolin*'s stories which contain this meaning must not come from Handan Chun's text.[665]

Yu Jiaxi quotes Lu Ji and Lu Yun because he has in mind two *Xiaolin*'s problematic stories appearing for the first time in Song collectanea. The first story is recorded in the *Sunpu* 筍譜, a text focused on bamboo and ascribed to the monk Zan Ning 贊寧 (919–1001 AD), and also in the *Ganzhu ji* 紺珠集 (c. 1131–1162 AD). The second story appears in the *Ganzhu ji* too. The stories are as follows:

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[661] This text, composed of 45 *juan*, was arranged in its final edition (it was compiled from 1039 to 1066) by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086).

[662] Yu Jiaxi, 1997, pp. 210, 213.

[663] See Tian Xiaofei, 2010, p. 188.

[664] In particular, Yu Jiaxi is referring to a passage contained in the *Suishu* 隋書's "Wenyuan" 文苑 chapter. It records that when they arrived in Luoyang, Lu Ji expressed the desire to write a "San du fu" 三都賦 (a *fu* about the three capitals of the three kingdoms, Wei, Wu and Shu), but soon discovered that Zuo Si 左思 (250–305) had already composed one with the same title; so he said to his brother Lu Yun: "Here there is a northern vulgar fellow (*cangfu* 傖父) who has already planned to write a 'Sandufu'"; *JS* 92. 2377.

[665] The case is different for the stories which contain the word *cang* with the only meaning of "vulgar fellow." This is the case of one story ascribed by the *Taiping guangji* to the *Xiaolin*. It says as follows: "Some vulgar fellows (*cang ren* 傖人) wanted to go together to pay a condolence visit, [but] none knew the etiquette. One said that he had understood it a bit, and said to his companion: "You follow my conduct." When they arrived at the place of mourning, the one with a former knowledge stayed ahead and bowed in front of the mat of honour; the remaining [fellows], each one after another, banged their shaved head against the back of the one standing in front of them; and the one who stayed ahead, trampling on the foot [of the one behind him], cursed saying: "Idiot!" Everyone, thinking that was part of the etiquette, stepping on each other's feet, screamed: "Idiot!" The latter was near to the son in mourning. He stepped on the son's foot and said: "Idiot!" *TPGJ* 262. 2052-53; see *Appendix A*. story No. 26.

漢人有適吳，吳人設筍，問是何物？語曰竹也！歸煮其床簀而不熟，乃謂其妻曰：“吳人轣轆，欺我如此！”

There was a man of [Shu] Han who went to the state of Wu. A man of Wu set up [for him] some bamboo shoots. [The man of Shu] asked: “What is this?” and [the man of Wu] answered: “Bamboo!” When the man of Shu came back home, he boiled his bed’s bamboo mat but he failed to cook it thoroughly, so he said to his wife: “People of Wu are tricky, he cheated me like this!”[666]

有人常食蔬茹，忽食羊肉，夢五臟神曰：“羊踏破菜園！”

There was a man, who was always eating vegetables; [one day] he unexpectedly ate sheep meat and dreamt the gods of the five internal organs saying [to him]: “The sheep trampled on the vegetable garden!”[667]

Both stories are ascribed to “Lu Yun’s *Xiaolin*” by the Song editors, so a hypothesis was formulated that there existed another *Xiaolin* by Lu Yun. In particular, the *Sunpu* specifies: “Lu Yun, who has the courtesy name of Shilong 士龍, by nature loved to laugh.” It is true that the *Jinshu*’s biography of Lu Yun records that he, by temperament, “could not restrain himself from laughter” (*ji xiao* 笑疾).[668] However, this supposed Lu Yun’s *Xiaolin* does not appear in the bibliographical chapter of the *Suishu*, nor elsewhere. It appears only in these two Song texts. Yu Jiaxi, thus, seems to believe in Lu Yun’s authorship (maybe because, in particular, the first story attests the stupidity of a man of Han from the point of view of a man of Wu). He then takes these two anecdotes as a proof to show that: the stories which contain references to the state of Wu, traditionally ascribed to Handan Chun,[669] could be a later time addition, as the stories written by Lu Yun but today collected in Handan Chun’s work.

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[666] *SP* p.73, *GZJ* 11. 318. See *Appendix A*, story No. 14.
[667] *GZJ* 13. 314.
[668] *JS* 54. 1481.
[669] Except the anecdotes regarding Zhang Wen, Yu Jiaxi doubts the authorship of another story, which the *Yiwen leiju* (72. 1244) ascribes to Handan Chun. The story records: “A man from the state of Wu went to the capital and was given to eat a meal which also consisted in butter-milk. He did not know what it was, but he forced [himself] to eat it. On his way home, he vomited and after that felt completely exhausted. He said to his son: ‘I do not regret to die like a northern barbarian (*cangren* 傖人), but you must be careful about it’;” Appendix No. 15. See Yu Jiaxi, 1997, p. 211. However, in a gloss to a similar story contained in the *Shishuo xinyu*, he does not raise the problem; on the contrary, he states that probably Handan Chun’s story inspired the words of one of the characters of *Shishuo*’s story. See *SSXY* 25/10. 791, n. 1. Ning Jiayu, probably following Yu Jiaxi’s analysis without quoting it, regards the stories about Zhang Wen and the story about the butter-milk as a later addition; see Ning Jiayu, 1991, pp. 13-14.

Lu Xun, when collecting the passages of the *Xiaolin* in his *Guxiaoshuo gouchen* 古小說鉤沈, thus recorded these two supposedly Lu Yun's stories with those ascribed to Handan Chun. Lu Xun seems to follow the criterion of selection adopted previously by the Qing scholar Ma Guohan. Ma Guohan, in fact, was the first to collect the *Sunpu*'s story, ascribing it to the *Xiaolin*. In his brief introduction to his *Xiaolin*'s collection, he stated that relying on historical documents, the attribution to Lu Yun was an error.[670] Lu Xun, analogously, thought that as there were no other records of a Lu Yun's *Xiaolin*, and the only text called *Xiaolin* during the Six dynasties period was that of Handan Chun, the two Song works might have attributed the wrong author to these two stories. He then was able to find three more stories to add to those collected by Ma Guohan; one is the above mentioned story about the sheep. However, in later times he was criticized for having included the above mentioned anecdotes in Handan Chun's *Xiaolin*. The modern scholar Tang Zhangru, followed by Ning Jiayu, believes in the *Ganzhu ji* and *Sunpu*'s records.[671] They both agree with Yu Jiaxi's assumption that humorous anecdotes featuring a "Wu-theme" can not come from Handan Chun. They further state that all these anecdotes with references to the Wu state must be a product of the Jin dynasty; when the state of Wu was destroyed by the Jin army (280), a conspicuous number of Wu people flew to the Jin capital and they became the subject of mockery (as the case of the Lu brothers attests). Therefore, the stories in which Wu people were mocked or ridiculed, were composed during the Jin dynasty.[672] Nevertheless, the proofs they proffer to attest their opinions are quite weak. We could agree to raise a dating problem for the stories which attest facts occurring after 224,[673] but the thematic problems they address are not so easy to solve, nor are they completely justified by their assertions. Handan Chun in fact was a man who lived during the Three Kingdoms, and the *Xiaolin* coherently contains stories which ridicule people of all the three states.[674] In absence

[670] Ma Guhan's statement is recorded in his "Xiaolin xu" 笑林序, previously contained in the *Yuhan shanfang jiyi shu* 玉函山房輯佚書, quoted in Ding Xigen, 1996, p.634. For the history of the collections of the passages of the *Xiaolin*, see the *Appendix A*.

[671] The opinion of Tang Zhangru 唐長孺 is quoted in Ning Jiayu, 1991, p. 14.

[672] Ning Jiayu, 1991, p. 14.

[673] Gu Nong, another modern scholar, also judges the stories about Zhang Wen and Shen Heng as later additions because they talk about facts happened in 224; however, as far as the other anecdotes are concerned, he regards the most of the material as written by Handan Chun; Gu Nong 2000, p. 77.

[674] Even if, as far as Wei is concerned, never is mentioned a Wei man (except for the story No. 7, which in the *TPGJ* is focused on a *Wei ren* 魏人 "a man of Wei" but the earlier *YWLJ* records as *mojia* 某甲 "someone") but people who lived in Wei territory.

of more reliable evidences, I do not believe that the presence of a "Wu-theme" could invalidate Handan Chun authorship. With the textual material available at present, Lu Xun's choice is understandable.[675]

Due to the fragmentary nature of the *Xiaolin* which is only a collection of anecdotes recovered from several collectanea into which the original book was scattered in different periods of time, and due to a number of problematic details in the anecdotes as present today, it is not possible to affirm Handan Chun's authorship for each of the stories ascribed to him. The content of Handan's *Xiaolin* was undoubtedly enlarged in later times,[676] and maybe rearranged by authors who will remain unknown. However, the historical reliability of the man Handan Chun, his cultural background, and the record of the *Suishu* can be a trustful source to state that there was a *Xiaolin* whose author was Handan Chun. The authenticity of individual stories is in various degrees open to speculation.

[675] Another modern scholar, Wei Shimin, in contrast to Tang Zhangru and Ning Jiayu, affirms the unquestionable Handan Chun's authorship of all the anecdotes ascribed to the *Xiaolin*; moreover he states that Handan's date of death is 241, Wei Shimin, 2005, pp. 186-189. Maybe he went too far in his statements; however, the fact that the opinions of the scholars are so different attests that there are still no solid evidence to make a firm statement about the authorship of the stories.

[676] For the history of the *Xiaolin* see the Appendix A.

Conclusion

In my work, I analysed the cultural context in which the *Xiaolin* has taken form, and I have highlighted the social changes that affected the educated elite and made possible the appearance of this new type of literary work, as the *Xiaolin* was. I showed that "humour" was a common feature of conversations among scholars during Wei Jin period. To have the capacity to make the listener laugh with clever wit was recognized as an appreciated skill (*cai*), so that "humorous talk" became one of the categories for character appraisal (*ren lun jianshi* 人倫鑒識). In the same way, to be able to write and perform orally "humorous" texts and composition became a criterion for evaluating personalities. This skill was one of the features of a new self fashioning of the educated and political elite of the Wei period. Accordingly, it is now clear why a respected poet and calligrapher at the court of Wei, as Handan Chun was, decided to compose the *Xiaolin*; it was a literary product which could provide a positive judgment, expressed by the members of the educated elite of the time, of its author.

I also described the text, tracing its previous legacy and its place in the classical Chinese literary panorama. Handan Chun created a new kind of textual product collecting anecdotes, whose narrative structures and plots are similar and sometimes identical to those found in earlier (Warring States-Han) collections of anecdotes, but framing them with a title, *Xiaolin-Forest of laughs*, he changed their reading paradigm. The title acknowledged that the aim of these stories was to amuse the reader. However, I also stated that because the stories do not show particular narrative innovations, the *Xiaolin* can not be conceived as a defined genre with distinct formal features.

As the critical edition of the text shows, this collection is composed of heterogeneous material. Each of the twenty-eight stories would deserve in the future a more detailed analysis. These anecdotes are a valuable source for thematic inquiries in the topic of "humour." Their analysis would be also a source of inspiration for researches in comparative studies.

Appendix A:

Translation of the *Xiaolin* (Forest of Laughs)

The History of the Text and the Sources

A book named *Xiaolin* 笑林 (Forest of Laughs) was recorded for the first time in the *Suishu* 隋書 "Jingji zhi" 經籍志 (Bibliographical chapter) under the "Xiaoshuo" 小説 (lesser sayings) category, contained in the "Zi" 子 (masters) section. Here it is ascribed to Handan Chun 邯鄲淳, identified as holding the *jishizhong* 給事中 (imperial attendant) office during Later Han times.[677] The *Suishu* records the *Xiaolin* as composed of three *juan*. The bibliographical chapter of Liu Xiu 劉昫's (887–946) *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, and that of Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1071)'s *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, still record three *juan*. After this, the name of the book does not appear in any other dynastic history. However, during the Southern Song, Wu Zeng 吳曾 (fl. ca. 1050), in his *Nenggaizhai manlu* 能改斋漫录 (Casual records from Nenggai Studio), records that the imperial palace depository had a copy of the *Old Xiaolin* 古笑林, in ten *juan*. [678] The modern scholar Wang Liqi states that this text was probably Handan Chun's *Xiaolin*, and according to this evidence the text was still available during Song dynasty and probably the original edition had been expanded.[679] Therefore, the book was lost after Song dynasty and its anecdotes were scattered and preserved in various compendia.

The first person to collect from different sources the anecdotes ascribed to the *Xiaolin* was the Ming dynasty scholar Chen Yumo 陳禹謨 (1548–1618). In *juan* 22 of his *Guanghuaji* 廣滑稽 (a collection of humorous anecdotes from the Han to the Ming dynasty) he grouped 13 items for a total of *one juan*. After him, Qing dynasty's Ma Guohan 馬國翰 (1784–1857) included one *juan* comprising of 26 items in his *Yuhan shanfang jiyi shu* 玉函山房輯佚書 (Collected fragments from the Jade Book–

[677] *SS* 34. 1011.
[678] *Nenggaizhai manlu*, p. 184. The post–face of the text is dated 1157.
[679] Wang Liqi, 1956, p. 1.

Case Mountain studio, 1883),[680] a collection of books reconstructed by gathering lost fragments from different sources. Lu Xun, then, basing his work on Ma Guohan's collection, edited the most complete edition of the *Xiaolin*, supplementing it with three more anecdotes he himslef discovered making a total of twenty nine stories. He included his *Xiaolin* edition in his *Guxiaoshuo gouchen* 古小説鉤沉 (Ancient anecdotes uncovered), finished in 1912.[681] The *Guxiaoshuo gouchen*, besides the *Xiaolin*, collects the fragments of another 35 Six Dynasties books (mostly *zhiuguai* 志怪)[682] which are lost in their entirety, but whose passages and fragments are preserved in Tang and Song collectanea. Lu Xun's work is a valuable source to investigate ancient texts and is an essential reference work. It shows Lu Xun's serious efforts in the area of ancient Chinese literature and his philological attention to the textual material he used.[683] Lu Xun's collection, at present, is the most complete collection of *Xiaolin*'s passages. Subsequently, Wang Liqi published a newly arranged version of the text in his *Lidai xiaohua ji* 歷代笑話集 (first published in 1956). He did not add new fragments, but simply changed the order of the anecdotes, listing the three discovered by Lu Xun at the end. [684] At present, the

[680] Yao Zhenzong, 1936, p. 478; Ding Xigen, 1996, p. 634.

[681] Lu Xun, 1973, *Gu xiaoshuo gouchen* 古小説鉤沉, Shanghai: Lu xun quanji, Vol. 8. pp. 179-187. The work was published only after his death, in 1938; see Wang, 1985, p. 91.

[682] For example, the *Shuyiji* 述異記 ascribed to Zu Chongzhi 祖沖之 (429–500 AD), the *Youminglu* 幽明錄, ascribed to Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444 AD), or the *Mingxiang* ji冥祥記 ascribed to Wang Yan 王琰 (late 5th century).

[683] However, we must be aware that the collections gathered by Lu Xun might have some errors. We know that, for example, in his research he used four editions of the *Taiping guangji*. He sadly relied primarily on Qing dynasty Huang Sheng黃晟 's edition (1755), which is the worst. He was aware of it. He used also the Ming Tan Kai 談愷's edition (1566), which instead is the best, and the version still used today. There are several studies, which research on the primary sources used by Lu Xun to compile his works. See for example: Zhang Jie 張傑, 2001, "Lu Xun yu Taiping guangji" 魯迅與太平廣記, in *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan*, No. 12, pp. 31-37, and A.A., 1991, *Lu Xun cangshu yanjiu* 魯迅藏書研究, Beijing, Zhongguo wenlian (in particular, Zhao Ying 趙英's "Lu Xun yu Tang Song leishu" 魯迅與唐宋類書, pp. 19-33). In western language see Wang John C.Y., 1985, "Lu Xun as a Scholar of Traditional Chinese Literature," in *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, Leo Ou–fan Lee ed., Berkeley, University of California Press, pp. 90–103.

[684] Wang Liqi, 1956, *Lidai xiaohua ji* 歷代笑話集, Shanghai gudian wenxue, Shanghai, pp. 1-6. In the *Lidai xiaohua ji* are collected together 75 books. Wang Liqi divides different editions of the same text in different sections, as for example, it has 6 sections for the *Qiyanlu* 啓顏錄, according on the text's sources (*Taiping guangji*, Donghuang manuscripts etc). The introduction written by Wang Liqi (15 pages) is too brief to give any valuable insight.
The collection of humorous books, *Zhongguo xiaohua shu* 中國笑話書, printed in Taipei, and edited by Yang Jialuo楊家駱, presents the *Xiaolin* in the edition of Wang Liqi (pp. 1–6). Yang Jialuo's main concern is the quantity of the texts, and he does not provide further analysis. He groups together 77 collection of humorous anecdotes. Only a few words are dedicated to Handan Chun's collection, but there is an interesting appendix on Ming dynasty's books of jokes (pp. 570–604).

most complete edition is that compiled recently (2008) by Ōki Yasushi which is contained in the *Shorīn shosān shofu hoka: rekidai showa* 笑林・笑賛・笑府他—歴代笑話.[685] This edition has a very short introduction, in which is briefly described the history of the text (not more than what is possible to find in a literary encyclopedia). It also provides some short notes about Handan Chun's life, paraphrasing the *Weilüe*'s passage found in the *Sanguo zhi*. The editor briefly comments that even if in some stories it could be possible to find a teaching to learn, this does not seem to be the main aim of the stories (however he does not provide further explanation).[686] The order of presentation of the stories follows Lu Xun's edition. Each story (28 in total because the two stories, which have as subjects Sheng Heng and Zhang Wen, are grouped together), has the original chinese text, a translation in colloquial japanese, and a translation in *kaki kudashi bun* 文し下き書 (transcription of Chinese classics into Japanese). Some lexical notes follow, as does a brief description about the original source of the fragment.

As far as my analysis and translation are concerned, I based them directly on the earliest sources in which the stories, ascribed to the *Xiaolin*, were preserved. These are all compendia or *leishu* (lit., "classified book" also translated generally as "encyclopaedia"). The earliest of these is the *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (Documents of the Northern Hall), compiled by Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638), and is divided into 19 sections and numerous subsections. However it must be used with care because it was considerably altered during the Ming dynasty.[687] The second most ancient source is the *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Compendium of Arts and Letters), compiled by Ouyang Xun 歐陽修 (557–641) et al. for the imperial library in 624 AD. It is composed of 100 *juan*, and divided into 47 subsections. It covers all the subjects and contains many quotations from works long since lost. In total the texts quoted are 1473. It is a valuable source because it always cites the title of the text it uses and perhaps it is the best Tang collectanea, even if some parts are corrupted by later interpolations.[688] The last Tang collection of passages from other books is the

[685] Ōki Yasushi 大木康, Takeda, Akira 竹田晃, Kuroda Mamiko 黒田真美子, 2008, *Shorīn shosān shofu hoka: rekidai showa* 笑林・笑賛・笑 府他—歴代笑話, Tōkyō, Meiji shoin, pp. 2-42.
[686] Oki, 2008, pp. 4.
[687] The edition I used is the reprint by Zhonguo shudian (Beijing, 1989). For details about the edition used by Lu Xun see Zhao Ying, 1991, pp. 24–25.
[688] The edition I used the Shanghai guji's edition (Shanghai, 1965). For details about the edition used by Lu Xun, see Zhao Ying, 1991, pp. 26–27.

Diaoyu ji 琱玉集 (Collected carved jades). The author of this collection is unknown. Originally it was composed of 15 *juan*, but was soon lost. Apparently, a fragment was copied in Japan in 747, was preserved in the Shinpuku 真福寺 monastery (Nagoya), and was discovered only at the end of the 11th century.[689] Today only *juan* 12 and 14 are preserved.[690] At the end of Tang-beginning of Song era the *Sunpu* 筍譜 (Manual of bamboo shoots) is found, which is a brief text in one *juan* ascribed to the monk Zan Ning 贊寧 (919–1001). It is divided into five sections concerning the use of the bamboo, including its culinary use.[691] Following this is the *Xutanzhu* 續談助 (Sequel to an aid to conversation), compiled by Chao Zaizhi 晁載之 (11th century). It is composed of five *juan* and is a collection of extracts of books. Every section is a book, making a total of 20.[692] There are also two of the most important compendia of the Song dynasty; the *Taiping yulan* 太平禦覽 (Imperially reviewed encyclopedia of the Taiping era), which is an imperially commissioned work completed in 983 under the supervision of Li Fang Li Fang 李昉 (925–996), who organized the work of fourteen men. Even if the *Taiping yulan* was compiled under the Song dynasty it was based entirely on three earlier *leishu* dating to no later than 641.[693] It is composed of 1000 *juan*, is divided into 55 main sections, and contains quotations from nearly 2000 sources.[694] The *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Reign), similar to the *Taiping yulan*, was imperially commissioned and supervisioned by Li Fang 李昉. It was finished in 978. It is composed of 500 *juan*, divided into 92 sections, and quotes 475 texts, defined as "xiaoshuo," from Han to Five Dynasties.[695] The *Ganzhu ji* 紺珠集 (Collection of dark purple pearls) (c. 1131–1162) is the last Song dynasty work. Its author is unknown and is composed of 13 *juan*. It records excerpts from several books, which

[689] Few information are available for this text Drège, 2007, pp. 26.
[690] The edition I used is the reprint by Shangwu yinshuguan (Shanghai, 1936), which is based on the reproduction of the two *juan* made by Li Shuchang 黎庶昌 (1837-1897), and collected in his *Guyi congshu* 古逸叢書.
[691] The edition I used is collected in Zuo Jia 左圭's *Zuoshi baichuan xuehai* 左氏百川學海, vol. 29.b, (Wujin Taoshi collection), reprint by Shangwu yinshuguan (Shanghai, 1927).
[692] The edition I used is the reprint by Shangwu yinshuguan (Shanghai, 1939).
[693] Campany, 2002, p. 378.
[694] The edition I used is the reprint by Zhonghua shuju (Beijing, 1960) For details about the edition used by Lu Xun see Zhao Ying, 1991, pp. 28-30.
[695] I used is the Zhonghua shuju's edition (Beijing, 1961). For details about the edition used by Lu Xun see Zhao Ying, 1991, pp. 30-31.

the collector might have considered as interesting and it always quotes its sources.[696] Cronologically, the *Leilin zashuo* 類林雜說 (Fragmentary writings from the forest of categories), is the last source. It was compiled during the Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234) by Wang Pengshou 王朋壽 in 1189. It is a collection of biographical annecdotes arranged by subject.[697]

Introduction to the translation

This is the full translation of all the stories preserved from the *Xiaolin* based on the earliest sources in which they were preserved. Each text is reproduced according to its primary sources, which, generally, are the *Taiping guangji* (13 anecdotes), the *Taiping yulan* (13 anecdotes), the *Yiwen leiju* (five anecdotes), the *Beitang Shuchao*, *Ganzhu ji*, *Xutanzhu*, *Leilin zashuo* (two anecdotes each), the *Diaoyu ji* and the *Sunpu* (one anecdote each). The abbreviation of the source of the text, on which the translation is based, is underlined. If an anecdote is preserved in more than one source, normally I choose the most ancient one. This criterion excludes only the *Beitang shuchao*, which was heavily rearranged in Ming times (see Story No. 17 and 22). If the source presents a non-standard form of a character (*suzi* 俗字), I do not change it. As a general rule, I do not intervene in the text, nor do I mend the text with passages from other sources for the narrative's sake, even if in later sources there are more narrative details (modern editions do this for Story No. 8 and 16). When needed, I will record also an alternative text with its own translation (for example, Story No. 8). If a story appears twice within the same source, and no earlier source is available, I will choose the longer version of the story (see Story No. 16). Only in case there is an error concerning a miswritten character, or if the earlier source lacks a part needed to make the story understandable, I will mend the text according to its other variants (see Story No. 15 and 20; Story No. 11). The small differences concerning variants of characters or words will be put into evidence after the Chinese text of the story, and will be numbered (1, 2, 3, etc.). There are three modern editions which were mainly consulted; those compiled by Lu Xun, Wang Liqi and Ōki

[696] The edition I used is that preserved in the *Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書本and reprint by Shangwu yinshuguan (Shanghai, 1983).

[697] See Drège, 2007, p. 29. The edition I used is published in the Jiaye xuetang congshu 嘉業學堂叢書 1, (Wuxing Liu shi Jia ye tang, 1920).

Yasushi. Among them, I rely on the Japanese one, which is the one that furnishes more details and annotations of the texts. The differences with the modern editions will be put in evidence by alphabetical letters (a, b, c, etc.), and will follow the glosses on the differences between the primary sources. The discrepancies between the modern editions (mainly concerning the variants of the characters) are probably due to the different editions of the sources used by their authors (for example, see Story No. 6 in which *jun* character appears in *LX* and *OY* but not in *WLQ*). Moreover, it is pertinent to remember the already problematical nature of this kind of primary sources. The *leishu* in fact usually present occasional misattribution, abridgment, narrowly selective quotations and paraphrasing. Occasionally, the translation will also present a comment with additional information about the story (comprehending Ding Naitong's observations on the examined anecdote), which may serve as a point for further research.

The stories are 28 in total - one less than Lu Xun's edition because I grouped together the anecdotes which involve Zhang Wen and Shen Heng (as the Japanese edition does). The abbreviations of the primary sources and the modern editions used follow below.

Abbreviations:

Primary sources:

(*BTSC*) *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔

(*DYJ*) *Diaoyu ji* 琱玉集

(*GZJ*) *Ganzhu ji* 紺珠集

(*LLZS*) *Leilin zashuo* 類林雜說

(*SP*) *Sunpu* 筍譜

(*TPGJ*) *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記

(*TPYL*) *Taiping yulan* 太平禦覽

(*XTZ*) *Xutanzhu* 續談助

(*YWLJ*) *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚

Modern editions:

(*LX*) Lu Xun 魯迅

(*WLQ*) Wang Liqi 王利器

(*OY*) Ōki Yasushi 大木康

Story No.1

魯有執長竿入城門者，初竪執之，不可入，橫執之，亦不可入，計無所出。
俄有老父至，曰：“吾非聖人，但見事多矣。何不以鋸中截而入。”
遂依而截之。*TPGJ* 262. 2053

At Lu[698] there was a man, who holding a long bamboo pole, [tried] to enter the city's gate; at the beginning he held it vertically, but was unable to enter; he held it horizontally, and again he was not able to enter, and did not know how to come out from it. In a moment arrived an old gentleman, and said: "I am not a wise man but I saw many things. Why don't you saw it in the middle to enter." So according [to the old man's words] he cut it [in two].

Comment

This story is ascribed to the motif of the "numskull" (n°1246).[699]

[698] Located in the today Shangdong province.
[699] Ding Naitong, 1986, p. 337.

Story No. 2

齊人就趙人學瑟，因之先調，膠柱而歸，三年不成一曲。齊人怪之，有從趙來者，問其意，方知向人之愚。*TPGJ* 262. 2053

A man from Qi[700] learned to play the *se* instrument (a type of zither) from a man of Zhao.[701] According to the pitch he had previously tuned up, he glued the [instrument's] small bridges and went back home. In three years he was not able to complete a single song. The man of Qi thought that it was [very] strange, [when] a man of Zhao came by, he asked him his opinion so that man knew he was talking with a stupid. [702]

[700] Located in the today Shandong province.
[701] Located in the today Hebei province.
[702] The *Shiji* records that Lin Xiangru 藺相如 said to King of Zhao : "If you now replace me with [Zhao] Kuo, it would be like gluing the small bridges of the *se* (a type of zither) and [then] try to play it." 王以名使括，若胶柱而鼓瑟耳。The King of Zhao wanted to replace Lian Po廉頗 with Zhao Kuo 趙括 (d. 260 BC) to command the army in the battle of Changping 長平. Zhao Kuo was younger than Lin and inexpert, so Lin tried to convince the King to reconsider his plan with these words. *SJ* 81. 2446.

Story No. 3

楚人有擔山雞者，路人問曰：“何鳥也？”擔者欺之曰：“鳳皇也！”路人曰：“我聞有鳳皇久矣，今真見之，汝賣之乎？”曰：“然！”乃酬千金，弗與；請加倍，乃與之。方將獻楚王，經宿而鳥死。路人不遑惜其金，惟恨不得以獻耳。國人傳之，咸以為真鳳而貴，宜欲獻之，遂聞于楚王。王感其欲獻己也，召而厚賜之，過買鳳之值十倍矣。*TPGJ* 461. 3781–82

There was a man of Chu[703] who was carrying a pheasant; along the way a man asked: “Which kind of bird it is?”, “It is a phoenix” he lied. The passer–by said: “I knew about [the existence of] the phoenix from a long time, today I [can finally] see a real one. Do you sell it?”. “Of course” he answered. The passer–by bid one thousand pieces of gold, but [the owner of the bird] refused. He asked to add another thousand, and after that he got it. When [the new owner] of the bird was about to give it to the King of Chu, after one night the bird died. The man was not sorry for the loss of his money, he was only sad that he could not present [the bird to his king]. His fellow countrymen spread this story. Everyone thought that it was a real phoenix and it was precious, and that he desired to present it as a gift [to his sovereign]. Thereupon this news arrived to the ears of the King of Chu, and he was so moved by the fact that the man wished to give him the precious bird, that he summoned him to reward him generously, ten times the amount the man paid to buy the phoenix.

[703] Located in the today Hubei province.

Story No. 4

楚人居貧，讀淮南方，“得螳蜋伺蟬自鄴葉，可以隱形，”遂於樹下仰取葉。螳蜋執葉伺蟬，以摘之，葉落樹下；樹下先有落葉，不能復分別，掃取數斗歸；一一以葉自鄴，問其妻曰：“汝見我不？”妻始時恆答言“見，”經日乃厭倦不堪，紿云：“不見。”嘿然大喜，齎葉入市，對面取人物，吏遂縛詣縣。縣官受辭，自說本末。官大笑，放而不治。*TPYL* 946. 4201

There was a man of Chu[704] who was very poor. He read the *Huainanfang* [705]['s following phrase]: "Once you obtain the leaf that the mantis, waiting for the cicada, uses to cover itself, it is possible to make oneself invisible." Therefore, he [stood] under a tree and faced upward in order to pick a leaf. [He saw] a mantis holding a leaf and waiting for the cicada and as he was picking it, the leaf fell under the tree. Under the tree there were already fallen leaves, so it was not possible to distinguish which one was the one that had just fallen down; so he gathered several *dou* [of leaves] and went back home. One by one he used the leaves to cover himself, [each time] asking his wife: "Can you see me?" At the beginning, the wife was constantly answering "Yes I do," but after an entire day she got extremely tired of it and cheated [him] saying: "I don't see you." He then gasped in delight and, holding the leaf, he entered the city market and took the goods of other people in front of their faces. Therefore, the [county' s] officer tied [him] up and brought him to the county government office. The county magistrate listened to the confession, and the accused told the story from the beginning to the end. The magistrate laughed loudly. He released him without punishing him.

[704] Name of place located in the today Hubei province.

[705] This text is maybe a lost chapter of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. The *Hanshu* at the "Chu Yuan wang zhuan" 楚元王傳 (Lord Yuan of Chu) records: "and at Huainan there was the *Zhenzhong Hongbao Yuanmi* text, it talks about immortals, control the spirits, and the art of transform things in gold" 而淮南有《枕中鴻寶苑秘书》。书言神仙使鬼物为金之术; *HS* 36. 1928. Yang Shigu 颜师古 explains that "Hongbao" and "Yuanmi" are the names of two chapters; they were stored up under the pillow and they concerned Taoist secret arts《鸿寶》、《苑秘书》, 并道术篇名。臧在枕中, 言常存録之不漏泄也; *HS* 36. 1929. Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343 AD) in his *Baopuzi nei pian* 抱朴子内篇 records: "[Cheng] Wei according to the *Zhenzhong Hongbao*, tried to make gold, but he failed." 偉按枕中鴻寶, 作金不成; *BPZ* 16. 1928 The Bibliographical chapter of *Suishu* 隋書 records the *Huainan wanbi jing* 淮南萬畢經 and the *Huainan bianhua shu* 淮南變化術, both in one *juan* and both lost; *SS* 34. 1038, and a text named *Hongbao* 鸿寶, in 10 *juan SS* 34.1008; this last one was still available at the time of *Suishu*'s compilation. Maybe all these were texts very similar.

Story No. 5

漢司徒崔烈辟上黨鮑堅為掾，將謁見，自慮不過，問先到者儀，適有荅曰：“隨典儀口唱(a)。”既謁，讚曰：“可拜。”堅亦曰：“可拜。”讚者曰：“就位。”堅亦曰：“就位。”因復着(b)履上座，將離席，不知履所在，讚者曰：“履着腳。”堅亦曰：“履着腳也。”*TPYL* 499. 2281

(a) *WLQ* and *LX* write *chang* 倡

(b) All the editors change it with the variant *zhe* 著.

The Han dynasty Minister of Education (*Sicong)*[706] Cui Lie[707]appointed Bao Jian from Shangdang[708] as a local clerk (*yuan*). When [Bao Jian] was about to have an audience with [Cui Lie], reflecting on the fact that he did not know enough about the procedure, he asked someone who had visited the minister earlier about the etiquette. He just replied: "Follow whatever the master of ceremonies is saying."[709] So he went to the audience; the master of ceremonies said: "You may bow," and Jian said: "You may bow." The master of ceremonies said: "Take your seat," and Jian said: "Take your seat." Because he had his shoes on when sitting, on leaving, he did not know where [his] shoes were. [When] the master said: "The shoes are on your feet," Jian echoed: "The shoes are on your feet."

Comment

This story belongs to the motif of the "numskull." The *Taiping yulan* also acknowledges this motif collecting the story under the "real stupidity" (*zhen yu* 真愚) section. However, Ding Naitong does not record this story in his *Zhongguo mingjian guoshi leixing suoyin* 中國民間故事類型索引.

[706] The *Sicong*, or Dukes (minister) of education, was one of the *Sangong* (three Dukes); Hucker, 1985, p. 458, (entry n. 5801).
[707] Cui Lie (?–193) , courtesy name 威考; *HHS* 52. 1703.
[708] Located in today southeast Shanxi.
[709] The text reads *kouchang* 口唱, he was "intoning."

Story No. 6

桓帝時有人辟(a)公府掾(1)者，倩人作奏記文；人不能為作，因語曰：“梁國葛龔者(b)先善為記文，自可寫用，不煩更作。”遂從人言寫記文，不去龔(c)名姓。府公(d)大驚，不荅而罷歸(e)。故時人語曰：“作奏雖工，宜去葛龔。”*TPYL* 496. 2268

(1) *TPYL* records *chuan* 椽, I did not find this character as a variant of *yuan* 掾, so I mended it as an error.

(a) *LX : ci* 辭

(b) *WLQ* prefers to put a comma instead of the character *zhe* 者, so it does Lu Xun.

(c) *WLQ* adds Ge 葛

(d) *LX* and *OYs: jun* 君

(e) *LX*: *mei gui* 沒歸

At the time of Emperor Huan (147–167 AD) there was a man appointed as an officer of the Gongfu bureau (*gongfuyuan*).[710] He asked someone to write an official document [711] for him. That man was unable to do it, so he said: “In previous times, Ge Gong from the state of Liang[712] was good at writing the edicts, you can copy and use [them], do not bother to do it again.” Following the words of this man, he copied the edict but he did not leave out Ge Gong’s name. The magistrate of the prefecture was astonished; he did not reply, but dismissed him from the office. This is the reason why at that time the people said: “Even if the composition is exquisite, you should leave out ‘Ge Gong’.”

[710] In Han times the *gongfu yuan* was an official in charge to help the *Sangong* 三公 (three dukes) that at that time were the highest advisor to the throne; Hucker, 1985, p. 292, (entry n. 3426). Hucker defines *yuan* as “clerk: lowly or unranked appointee found in many agencies civil and military, at all level of the governmental hierarchy;” Hucker, 1985, p. 595, (entry n. 8219). However, in Han times, the *yuan* who was working under the *gongfu* bureau was having a rank higher that the other *yuan*, see Zhao Guanghuai 趙光懷, 2003, *Lun Handai Gongfuyuan* 論漢代公府掾, in Linyi shifan xueyuan bao, vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 48–51. See also *HHS* 114. 3558.

[711] In Han times the *zouji* 奏記 was a document contained suggestions and addressed to the *gongfu* government and to other high officials.

[712] The *Hou Hanshu* records: “Ge Gong, whose courtesy name was Fufu, was a man of Ningling (in today Henan) of the state of Liang. During Emperor He reign (88–105 AD), he was famous because good at writing official documents” 葛龔字符甫，梁國寧陵人也。和帝時，以善文記知名。*HHS* 80. 2617.

Comment

The biography of Ge Gong is recorded in the "Wenyuan" 文苑 chapter of the *Hou Hanshu.*[713] Here, the Tang dynasty commentary records as follow:

或有請龔奏以干人者，龔為作之，其人寫之，忘自載其名，因並寫龔名以進之。故時人為之語曰：「作奏雖工，宜去葛龔。」事見笑林.[714]

Someone asked the help of [Ge] Gong to write a document. Gong composed it, and the man wrote it down forgetting to put his own name; instead he wrote the name of Gong and submitted it. So the people of his time said: "Even if the composition is exquisite, you should leave out 'Ge Gong'." This story appears in the *Xiaolin.*

As appears evident, in the story recorded by the *Houhan shu* commentary, Ge Gong is not a man of the past who becomes a model to imitate. Rather, he is one of the protagonists of the story, which is set in his time.

The Liu Zhiji's 劉知幾 (661–721 AD) *Shitong* 史通 in the "Yinxi" 因習 (Become a custom through a long usage) chapter also records:

昔漢代有修奏記於其府者，遂盜葛龔所作而進之，既具錄他文，不知改易名姓，時人謂之曰：「作奏雖工，宜去葛龔。」及邯鄲氏撰《笑林》，載之以為口實。嗟乎！歷觀自古，此類尤多，其有宜去而不去者，豈直葛龔而已！何事於斯，獨致解頤之誚也。凡為史者，苟能識事詳審，措辭精密，舉一隅以三隅反，告諸往而知諸來，斯庶幾可以無大過矣。

In the past, during the Han dynasty, there was a man who was embellishing his official documents at his office; so he stole the passages written by Ge Gong and submitted them to his superior. He wrote down all his (Gong's) text but did not realize that he would have to change the name. The people of his time said: "Even if the composition is exquisite, you should leave out 'Ge Gong';" and when Handan Chun was writing his *Xiaolin*, he recorded this story as a gossip everybody was talking about.[715] Ah! Analyzing the historical texts one by one we can find so many of these stories. They should have been deleted but they were not, and there are far more than one "Ge Gong"! Why are they here, when they are only used

[713] *HHS* 80. 2616–2617.
[714] *HHS* 80. 2617, n. 1.
[715] In this way has to be understood the word *koushi* 口實, as gossip, laughingstock, street's talk aimed to be entertaining.

to ridicule? Those who are historians can carefully analyse the facts and precisely choose the right words, and draw inferences about other cases from one instance, and expose all the records, thus probably it's not a big mistake. [716]

In the *Shitong*, this is an important chapter because it contains Liu Zhiji's point of view on historical texts and on his attitude towards writing history. He talks about the errors made by previous historians and about incongruent accounts but he declares that all the texts have to be preserved and analysed; he is against an emendation on previous texts. Liu Zhiji defines Handan Chun's stories as "gossip everybody is talking about." As noted in the second chapter of this thesis, they are subjects for a conversation more than part of a determined humorous literary genre (jokes).

[716] *ST* 18. 270.

Story No. 7

某甲(1)夜暴疾，命(2)門人鑽火。其夜(3)陰暝(4,a)，未得火，催之急(5)，門人忿然曰：“君責之(6,b)亦大無道理！今闇如漆，何以不把火照我？我(7)當得覓鑽火具，*YWLJ* 80. 1366, *TPYL* 869. 3854 然後易得耳。” 孔文舉聞之曰：“責人當以其方也。”*TPGJ* 258. 2008

(1) *TPGJ: Wei ren* 魏人

(2) *TPYL* omits *ming* 命

(3) *TPGJ* : *shi xi* 是夕

(4) *TPYL: yin an* 陰 暗

(5) *TPGJ: du pop o ji* 督迫頗急 instead of *wei de huo cui zhi ji* 未得火催之急

(6) *TPYL* and *TPGJ: ren* 人

(7) *TPYL* omits *wo* 我

(a) *OY* writes *ming* 暝 instead of *ming* 暝 (they are synonymous but the *YWLJ* records the second).

(b) *WLQ* and *OY* follows *TPYL*'s version and writes *ren*人, *LX* leaves *zhi.*

One night a fellow felt suddenly ill, so he told his servant to light a lamp. That night was very dark and the servant was not able to find [the instruments] to light up [the lantern]. [That fellow] urged him to do it faster, so the servant got angry and said: “That you blame me, Sir, it’s greatly unfair! Now it’s dark, almost pitch–black. Why don’t you shine a light on me? So that I can find the lighter instruments (a stone and a knife).”

—When Kong Rong[717] heard about this, he said: “When somebody reproaches others, one should use this method.”

[717] Kong Rong 孔融 (153–208) whose courtesy name was Wenju 文舉, was ranked as one of the Seven Masters of Jian’an era (Jian’an qizi 建安七子).

Comment

The *Xutanzhu* (4. 82) records this story in the *Yinyun xiaoshuo* 殷蕓小説[718] but ascribes it to a text called *Paixie wen* 俳諧文. Moreover the protagonist of the story is not an unknown fellow but Kong Rong himself. The *Taiping guangji* is the only source (among those which ascribe this story to the *Xiaolin*) to cite Kong Rong. However, the *Taiping guangji*'s passage: "When Kong Rong heard about this, he said: 'When somebody reproaches others, one should use this method,'" seems separated from the story and it could be a later addition.

[718] This text appears in the bibliographical chapter of the *Suishu*, in which is said that Emperor Wu 武 of Liang (464–549) ordered Yin Yun 殷蕓 to compile it. The book, probably not an original work but a digest of other works (Campany, 1996, p. 89) is lost. Yu Jiayang 餘嘉揚, in his *Yin Yun xiaoshuo jizheng* 殷芸小説輯証 has collected 154 passages. This study is contained in *Yu Jiaxi wen shi lun ji* 餘嘉錫文史論集 (Changsha, Yuelu shushe, 1997).

Story No. 8

趙伯翁肥大, 夏日醉臥, 有數歲孫兒緣其肚上戲, 因以李八九枚內其臍中, 至後日李大爛汁出, 乃泣謂家人曰:“我腸爛將死。”明日李核出, 乃知孫兒所內李子也。*TPYL* 371. 1713

Zhao Boweng was very fat. On a summer day, he was lying asleep drunk, when his grandson of a few years climbed up on his stomach to play; so he put eight or nine plums inside the man's navel. The day after, the plums were very rotten and the juice came out. Crying, he said to his family: "My intestine is rotten, I'm going to die." The day after, the plum–stones rolled out [from his bosom], so he realized that it was his grandson who had put them inside [his navel].

Variants

趙伯翁醉眠, 數歲孫兒緣其腹戲, 因以李子內其朏臍中, 累七八枚. 既醒, 了不覺. 數日後, 乃知痛, 李爛汁出, 以為臍穴, 懼死, 乃命妻子處分家事. 李核出, 尋問乃知是孫兒所為。*TPYL* 968. 4294

When Zhao Bogong was lying asleep drunk, his grandson of a few years climbed up on his stomach to play; so he put some plums inside the man's navel; there were seven or eight of it. When he sobered up, he didn't realize what was happened. Some days later, he [began] to feel a pain. The plums were rotten, the juice came out, [but] he thought [that the liquid was coming out] from the hole of the navel. He feared to die and ordered to his wife to arrange the family property. [When] the plum–stones rolled out [from his bosom], he asked what had happened and realized that it was his grandson who had done it.

趙伯, 姓趙, 字伯翁, 不知何時人也, 為人大肥, 夏日醉臥，有數歲孫兒緣其腹，因以李八九枚內朏臍中，後爛汁出，謂言臍濃，告家人曰:“我將死矣。”遂遺勑分處須臾。李核乃出始，知孫兒所爲。*DYJ* 14. 81

Zhao Bo, whose surname was Zhao and his courtesy name was Boweng, his epoch is unknown,[719] was very fat. On a summer day, he was lying asleep drunk, when his grandson of a few years climbed up on his belly; so he put eight or nine plums inside the man's navel. Later, the juice of the rotten [plums] came out, he said that his navel was dense [of liquid] and announced to his family: "I'm going to die!" Then, in a moment, he gave orders on how

[719] This is clearly a gloss put inside the text.

arrange [his property]. When the plum–stones began to rolled out, he realized that it was his grandson who had done it.

WLQ, following *LX*, creates another version of this anecdote combining together different phrases from the two *TPYL's* versions:

趙伯公肥大，夏日醉臥，孫兒緣其肚上戲，因以李子內其臍中，累七八枚;既醒，了不覺；數日後，乃知痛。李大爛，汁出，以為臍穴，懼死, 乃命妻子處分家事，乃泣謂家人曰：“我腸爛將死。”明日李核出，乃知孫兒所內李子也。

Zhao Bogong was very fat. On a summer day, he was lying asleep drunk, when his grandson climbed up on his stomach to play; so he put some plums inside the man's navel, there were seven or eight of it. When he sobered up, he didn't realize what was happened. Some days later, he [began] to feel a pain. The plums were very rotten, the juice came out, [but] he thought [that the liquid was coming out from] the hole of the navel. He feared to die and ordered to his wife to arrange the family property. Crying, he said to [his] family: "My intestine is rotten, I'm going to die." The day after, the plum–stones rolled out [from his bosom]; he asked what had happened and realized that it was his grandson who had put them inside [his navel].

趙伯翁肥大, 夏日醉臥, 孫兒緣其肚子戲，因以李八九枚入翁臍中，後數日李爛莫出乃泣謂家人曰：“我腸爛將死矣。”明日視之乃有李核出，知向小兒所藏李子也。

LLZS 10/59. 3.

Zhao Boweng was very fat. On a summer day, he was lying asleep drunk, when his grandson climbed up on his stomach to play; so he put eight or nine plums inside Weng's navel. After some days the juice of the plums came out and, crying, he said to his family: "My intestine is rotten, I'm going to die." The day after, he looked [at his navel] and the plum–stones came out; he [then] knew that it was his grandson who had hidden them [inside].

Story No. 9

伯翁妹肥於兄，嫁於王氏，嫌其太肥，遂誣云無女身，乃遣之。後更嫁李氏，乃得女身。方驗前誣也。*LLZS* 10/59. 3.

The younger sister of Boweng was fatter than the brother. She was given as a spouse to a man of the Wang family, who did not like that she was so fat, so he falsely accused her of not being a virgin and cast her off. Later, she married a man of the Li family and he found out that she was a virgin. This was proof that previously [she] had been falsely accused.

Comment

Only the *Leilin zashuo* preserves this story, which follows the anecdote about Zhao Boweng. It acknowledged the *Xiaolin* as the source. Both anecdotes are recorded in the "Feishou" 肥瘦 section (fat and thin). Maybe they were part of a group of anecdotes regarding a family of fat people. The two protagonists, in fact, are close relatives and have the same physical problem.

Story No. 10

漢世有人年老(a)無子，家富，性儉嗇，惡衣蔬食，侵晨而起，侵夜而息；營理產業，聚歛無厭；而不敢自用。或人從之求丐者，不得已而入內取錢十，自堂而出，隨步輒減，比至于外，纔餘半在，閉目以授乞者。尋復囑云：“我傾家贍君，慎勿他說，復相效而來！”老人俄死，田宅沒官，貨財充於內帑矣。*TPGJ* 165. 1207

(a) *WLQ* writes *you lao ren* 有老人, it's an error.

In Han times there was an old man who did not have sons. He was rich but stingy by nature and was [dressed in] shabby clothes and [ate] coarse food; he woke at dawn and rested at night; he took care of his property and amassed wealth insatiably, but he did not dare to use it.

Once someone begged from him, and he could not help himself but go inside, take ten coins and [then] from the room to the exit, every step constantly decreased [them]. When he arrived outside, the sum was already half of its original. He closed his eyes, as he gave them to the beggar. After a short while, he repeatedly exhorted: "I have ruined my family in order to support you. Be careful to not reveal to others, or they will imitate you and come to me as well!"

The old man died soon after. His field and house were not looked after, and his goods and belongings filled up the state treasury.

Story No. 11

沈珩(1)弟峻，字叔山，有名譽，而性儉吝。張溫使蜀，與峻別(2)，峻入內良久，出語溫曰：“向擇一端布，欲以(a)送卿，而無麤者。”溫嘉其能顯非(3)。*YWLJ* 85. 1463, *TPYL* 820. 3651，*XTZ* 4.84 又嘗經太湖岸上，使從者取鹽水；已而恨多，敕令還減之。尋亦自愧曰：“此吾天性也！”又說曰：姚彪與張溫俱至武昌, 遇吳興沈珩。守風糧盡, 遣人從彪貸鹽一百斛。彪性峻直, 得書不荅, 方與溫談論。良久, 呼左右, 倒百斛鹽著江中。謂溫曰：“明吾不惜, 惜所與耳！”沈珩弟峻, 有名譽而性儉吝。*TPGJ* 165. 1207

(1) *TPGJ:* Wu Shen Heng 吳沈珩

(2) The three characters *yu* Jun *bie* 與峻別 are added according *TPGJ; TPYL: ci* Jun 辭峻.

(3) *TPGJ: qi wu yin* 其無隱

(a) *WLQ* adds *ye* 也.

The younger brother of Shen Heng, [720] Jun, [721] with the courtesy name (*zi*) of Shushan, was a man of fame and prestige but by nature was frugal and stingy. When Zhang Wen[722] was about to leave for a diplomatic mission to Shu (224), he [went to visit Jun] to bid farewell to him. Jun disappeared inside [his house] for a long time; when he came out, he said to Wen: “I wanted to pick out a piece of cloth to give to you but there was no rough one left.” [Zhang] Wen praised his capacity of not hiding anything.

Another time, Shen Jun went to the bank of the lake Tai[723]and made his servant take the salt. After a while he regretted that it was too much and ordered to

[720] Shen Heng, courtesy name Zhongshan 仲山, was a man of Wu 吳 that served under Wendi of Wei 魏文帝’s reign (220–226) as an officer and was enfeoffed as “Marquise of the prefecture of Yongan” 永安鄉侯. See *Sanguozhi* 三國志, *juan* 47.

[721] Sheng Jun, courtesy name Shigao 士高 was a man of Wukang 武康 in Wuxing prefecture 吳興 (today city Deqing 德清, Zhejiang). His name is recorded in the “Rulin zhuan” 儒林傳 (Biographies of scholars) of the Liangshu 梁書.

[722] Zhang Wen (192–?), courtesy name Huishu 惠恕, was a man of the prefecture of Wu. He served as *dachen* 大臣 under the reign of western Wu (220–280). See *Sanguozhi* 三國志, *juan* 57.

[723] Located between today Zhejiang and Jiangsu province.

give part of it back. Immediately, he felt ashamed of himself and said: “This is my nature!!”[724]

It is also said that Yao Biao[725] and Zhang Wen were going together to Wuchang[726] when they met Shen Heng of Wuxing. [727] He was on the shore waiting for the right moment to sail a boat and had used up all the provisions; so he sent a man to borrow one hundred *hu* of salt from Biao. Biao was by nature an extremely straightforward man. He received the letter of the request but did not answer it [because] he was in the middle of a conversation with Wen. After a long while, he ordered his attendants to pour one hundred *hu* of salt into the water of Jiang river and said to Wen: “You understand, the pity is not to give away the salt, it’s to give it to him.” The younger brother of Sheng Heng, Jun, was a man of fame and prestige but by nature was frugal and stingy.[728]

Variant

This last story appears also with slight differences in the *Taiping yulan*:

姚彪至武昌遇風, 與沈浙江渚, 守風粮用盡, 遣人從彪貸鹽百斛. 得書不荅, 刺（敕）左右倒鹽百斛着江水中曰:明吾不惜, 惜所與耳. *TPYL* 865. 3841

Yao Biao went to Wuchang to sail, he met Sheng Heng on Jiang[729] river’s shore, waiting for the right moment to sail a boat. He had used up all the provisions, so he sent a man to borrow one hundred *hu* of salt from Biao. He received the letter of the request but did not answer to it. He ordered his attendants to pour one hundred *hu* of salt into the water of Jiang river, and said: “You under stand, the pity is not to give away the salt, it’s to give it to him”.

[724] This story is found also in the *Yinyun xiaoshuo* 殷蕓小説 see *XTZ* 4. 86, Yu Jiaxi collected the passages of the *Yiyun xiaoshuo*, see Yu Jiaxi 1997, pp. 297–8.
[725] I did not find traces of this character in any given text.
[726] It is located in the today Hubei province, near the Changjiang river.
[727] Wuxing is the old name of Huzhou, today located in Zhejiang province.
[728] The *Taiping guangji’s* version reproposes at the end the entry of the first story regarding Shen Jun.
[729] Zhe 浙 is probably an error for Heng珩.

WLQ follows *LX* and puts together the *TPGJ* and the *TPYL*:

姚彪與張溫俱至武昌，遇吳興沈珩于江渚守風，糧用盡，遣人從彪貸鹽一百斛。彪性峻直，得書不荅，方與溫談論。良久，敕左右倒鹽百斛著江水。謂溫曰：“明吾不惜，惜所與耳！”

Yao Biao and Zhang Wen were going together to Wuchang when they met Shen Heng of Wuxing that was on the shore of Jiang river waiting for the right moment to sail a boat. He had used up all the provisions, so he sent a man to borrow one hundred *hu* of salt from Biao. Biao was by nature an extremely honest straightforward man; he received the letter but did not answer to it [because] he was in a middle of the conversation with Wen. After a long while, he ordered his attendants to pour one hundred *hu* of salt into the water of Jiang river and said to Wen: “You understand, the pity is not to give away the salt, I was sorry to give it to him.”

Story No. 12

吳國胡邕，為人好色，娶妻張氏，憐之不捨。後卒，邕亦亡，家人便殯于後園中。三年取葬，見冢上(a)化作二人；常見抱如臥時。人競笑之。

TPGJ 389. 3104

(a) *LX*, *WLQ*, *OY* record *tu* 土

Hu Yong of the state of Wu[730] was a man who really liked women. He married a woman from the Zhang family, and he loved her so much that could not bear to be apart from her. Later she died, and Yong also passed away. The family promptly arranged to put the corpse in the coffin in the backyard. Three years after the burial, they saw that the earth over the grave had changed into the shapes of two persons. They were embracing each other as they were sleeping. All the people laughed at the sight.

Comment

A similar story appears in the *Shishu xinyu*, at the "Huoni" 惑溺 (Delusion and Infatuation) chapter. It says as follows:

荀奉倩與婦至篤，冬月婦病熱，乃出中庭自取冷，還以身熨之。婦亡，奉倩後少時亦卒。以是獲譏於世。奉倩曰："婦人德不足稱，當以色為主。"裴令聞之曰："此乃是興到之事，非盛德言，冀後人未昧此語。"

Xun Can (?209 – 238? AD) and his wife, Cao Peicui, were extremely devoted to each other. During the winter months his wife became sick and was flushed with fever, whereupon Can went put into the central courtyard, and after he himself had taken chill, came back and pressed his cold body against hers. His wife died, and short while afterward Can also died. Because of this he was criticized by the world. Xun Can had once said, "A woman's virtue is not worth praising; her beauty should considered the most important thing." On hearing of this, Pei Wei exclaimed, "This is nothing but a matter of whimsy; it's not the statement of a man of complete virtue. Let's hope that men of later ages won't be led astray by this remark!"[731]

[730] Located in today Jiangsu province.
[731] *SSXY* 35/2. 919; trans. Mather, 1976, p. 485.

Story No. 13

平原陶丘氏，取渤海墨台氏女，女色甚美，才甚令，復相敬。已生一男而歸。母丁氏，年老，進見女聳。女聳既歸而遣婦。婦臨去請罪, 夫曰：“曩見夫人，年德以衰，非昔日比。亦恐新婦老後，必復如此。是以遣，實無他故。”

TPYL 499. 2281

A certain Taoqiu[732] from Pingyuan[733] married a Motai girl[734] from Bohai.[735] She was extremely beautiful and talented, and they respected each other. Afterward, she gave birth to a male child and she went back to her home [to pay a visit to her family]. Her mother, from a Ding family, was old. She had an audience with the son in law. Once back, he cast off his wife and sent her home. When she was about to leave, she asked about her fault. The husband said: “Some days ago I saw your mother. She had lost the decorous aspect [of her youth]; she is not as she used to be in the past. I feared that my new wife, once older, certainly could become like her. This is why I sent you away; there is really no other reason.”

Comment

This story could be ascribed to the motif of the “numskull,” as the story No. 1, 2, 3 etc. It was understood as such also by the compilers of the *TPYL* which place it in the “real stupidity” (*zhen yu* 真愚) section. In particular, This is the first literary evidence of the motif of the “stupid son in law” (*dai nüxi* 呆女婿).[736]

[732] Taoqiu is the surname.
[733] Located into today Shandong.
[734] Motai is the surname of her family.
[735] Name of a place located in the today Hebei.
[736] Gu Nong, 2000, p. 79. See Eberhard, 1999, pp. 324–343. After the May Fourth Movement the interest in the so called “folk literature” (*minjian wenxue* 民間文學) increased. In this period we record the birth of the magazine “Minjian yishu” 民間藝術 (Folk arts) that collected several stories about this topic. Lin Lan 林蘭‘s collection of stories, *Dai nüxu gushi* 呆女婿故事, was published in 1930.

Story No. 14

漢人有適吳，吳人設筍，問是何物？語曰竹也！歸煮其床簀而不熟，乃謂其妻曰：“吳人轣轆，欺我如此！”　*SP* p. 24, *GZJ* 11. 38

There was a man of [Shu] Han who went to the state of Wu. A man of Wu set up [for him] some bamboo shoots. [The man of Shu] asked: “What is this?” and [the man of Wu] answered: “Bamboo!” When the man of Shu came back home, he boiled his bed’s bamboo mat, but he failed to cook them thoroughly, so he said to his wife: “People of Wu are tricky, he cheated me like this!!”

Comment

Both texts ascribe this anecdotes to Lu Yun 陸雲’s *Xiaolin*.

This story is ascribed to the motif of the “numskull” (n°1339).[737]

[737] Ding Naitong, 1986, p. 353.

Story No. 15

吳人至京師，為設食者(a)有酪蘇(1)，未(2)知是何物也，強而食之，歸吐，遂至困頓, 謂其子曰：“與傖人同死，亦無所恨；然(3)汝故宜慎之。”

YWLJ 72. 1244; *TPYL* 858. 3812

(1) *TPYL*: *laosu* 酪酥

(2) *YWLJ*: *lai* 來, I mended the text following *TPYL*.

(3) It is missed in *TPYL* ‘s version.

(a) *WLQ* prefers to put a comma instead of the character *zhe* 者

A man from the state of Wu[738] went to the capital[739] and was given to eat a meal which also consisted of butter–milk.[740] He did not know what it was, but he forced [himself] to eat it. On his way home, he vomited and after that felt completely exhausted. He said to his son: “I do not regret to die like a northern barbarian (*cangren* 傖人),[741] but you must be careful about it.”

[738] It was located in the today Jiangsu.

[739] If we have to relate the context of this story to Later Han period the capital mentioned here is Luoyang.

[740] See also *SSXY* 11/2. 580 where it is said that someone gifted Cao Cao with a cup of “lao” and he shared it with his friends (the anecdote involves also a joke with a character); even if the word used is *dan* 啖 “to eat,” I think that it is more near to “to drink” as the consistence of the dairy product is like a dense liquid. In the first entry of “Lao su” 酪蘇 section in *Yiwen leiju*, is recorded the definition of the *Shiming* 釋名 where it is said that: *lao* means *ze* (dense), what is made by the milk and makes the muscle abundant (*feize*). 酪，澤也。乳汁所作使人肥澤也。*YWLJ* 72. 1244; so I’m inclined to translate *laosu* as “butter milk,” something more near to the butter’s consistence than to that of the “curd.” Mather translates it as “curd,” see the note below.

[741] Starting from the Three Reigns period, the words *cang* 傖 *cangren* 傖人, *cangfu* 傖父, *canggui* 傖鬼, are all insults addressed by southern people of Wu to northern people. See *SSXY* 6. 360–61, n. 2. The *Shishuo xinyu* at the “Paitiao” chapter records a similar story (also cited by the *Taiping yulan* in the same paragraph of the *Xiaolin*’s passage): Lu Wan once went to visit Chancellor Wang Dao, who fed him some curds (*lao*). After Lu had returned home he proceeded to get sick. The following morning he wrote Wang a note, saying ”Yesterday I ate a little too much curds and was in critical condition all night. Thought I’m a native of Wu, I came very near to becoming a northern ghost (*cang gui*)!”陸太尉詣王丞相，王公食以酪。陸還遂病。明日與王箋云：“昨食酪小過，通夜委頓。民雖吳人，幾為傖鬼。”*SSXY* 25/10. 790–91; trans. Mather, 2002, p. 439. Yu Jiaxi hypothesizes that since *Xiaolin* is a Wei period text, Lu Wan could have borrowed its words to joke with Wang Dao, see *SSXY* 25/10. 791, n. 1.

Story No. 16

南方人至京師者，人戒之曰：“汝得物唯食，慎勿問其名也！”後詣(a)主人，入門內，見馬矢(1)，便食, 惡(3)臭(4), 乃(5)步進, 見敗屩棄於路, 因復嚼，殊不可咽。顧伴曰：“且止！人言不可皆信。”(6)後詣貴官，為設饌(7), 因相視曰：“故是首物，(8)且當勿食。”*TPYL* 698. 3117, 851. 3804

(1) *TPYL 851: shi* 屎

(2) *TPYL 851: bian shi zhi jue* 便食之覺

(3) Only in *TPYL 698.*

(4) *TPYL 851:* 旣

(5) *TPYL 851: nai zhi bu jin* 乃止步進. “he thought it was awfully stinking so he stopped, then he went on” 便食之覺旣乃止步進

(6) From *bu* 步 to *xin* 信 only in *TPYL 698.*

(7) *TPYL* 851*:* 餽

(8) *TPYL* 851: *jie gu xi wu* 戒故昔物 instead of *gu shi shou wu*故是首物.

(a) Both *LX* and *OY* add the character *wang* 往 but this word is not present in both *TPYL*’s passages.

A southerner went to the capital,[742] and someone admonished him saying: “[If] you find something, just eat it, be careful not to ask what it is!” Later, he went to visit someone at his home. As he entered the door, he saw horse’s excrement and promptly ate it. It was stinking very badly. He then went on and saw a shabby straw sandal abandoned on the street, so again he chewed it [but] it was very hard to swallow. Looking at his companion, he said: “That’s enough! We can’t believe everything the people say.” Later on, he went to visit a high-ranking official and he was presented with food; so he looked [at his companion] and said: “Because it is the first thing, it’s better not to eat it.”

[742] During the Later Han dynasty the capital was Luoyang, in the North.

Story No. 17

太原人夜失火，出物(1)，欲出銅鎗(a)，誤出(2)熨斗，便大驚惋(3)。語(4)其兒曰：“異事！(5)火未至，鎗(6)已被燒失腳。”

BTSC 135. 546, *YWLJ* 72. 1254, *TPYL* 757. 3360

(1) *TPYL* omits *chu wu* 出物

(2) *TPYL* 757: *she de* 設得 instead of *wu chu* 誤出

(3) *TPYL*: *guai* 怪

(4) *TPYL: wei* 謂

(5) *BTSC* omits *wei qi er yue yi shi* 謂其兒曰異事

(6) *BTSC, TPYL* omits *qiang* 鎗

(a) *WLQ* writes *qiang* 槍 instead of *qiang* 鎗

During the night, a fire broke out in the home of a man from Taiyuan. When he was moving out his things [from the house], he wanted to remove a bronze tripod [but] he mistakenly took out a pressing flatiron. He was then greatly surprised. He said to his son: “What a strange thing! The fire still has not reached it, but the tripod legs have already burnt off!”

Story No. 18

平原人有善治傴者，自云：“不善，人百一人耳。”有人曲度八尺，直度六尺，乃厚貨求治。曰：“君且〇。”欲上背踏之。傴者曰：“將殺我！”曰：“趣令君直, 焉知死事。”*XTZ* 4. 84

Among the population of Pingyuan,[743] there was a man who was able to cure the hunchback. He used to say about himself: “I am not successful in one case out of one hundred.” A man curved about eight *chi* and tall about six *chi*, with a generous amount of money, asked to be cured. [The man able to cure] said: “Sir [please lie down],” and he wanted to climb the hunchback and step on it. So, the man with the hunchback said: “You will kill me!” The other one answered: “I’m only interested in making you straight; How can I know if you are going to die!”[744]

Comment

This story is very similar to a parable found in the *Baiyujing* 百喻經 (Sutra of the One Hundred Parables). It says as follows:

譬如有人，卒患脊僂，請醫聞治。醫以酥塗，上下著闊，用力痛壓，不覺雙目一時並出。

For example, there was a man who suddenly contracted an illness in his hunchback so he asked a doctor for help. The doctor applied some butter [on the man’s hunchback], he squeezed [his back] up and down with two planks, and, using his strength, he painfully pressed it. Unexpectedly, the man’s eyes immediately popped out.[745]

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[743] A prefecture during Han dynasty, today it is a region in the western part of Shangdong province.

[744] In the *XTZ* this story appears inside the *Yin Yun xiaoshuo* collection; see also Yu Jiaxi, 1997, p. 293.

[745] See *Baiyujing*, p. 74. For references on Buddhist literature and its influence on WeiJin narrative see: Ou Chongjing 歐崇敬, 2004, “Wei Jin Nanbei chao foxue de mailuo fazhan gouzao yu licheng: Zhongguo foxue de jichuxinggou”魏晉南北朝佛學的脈絡發展構造與歷程：中國佛學的基礎形構, in *Chengda zongjiao yu wenhuaxuebao*, N. 4, pp. 107-172; Wang Qing 王青, 2004, “Hanyi fojing zhong de yindu minjian gushi ji qi bentuhua tujing: yi yuren gushi, zhihui gushi wei zhongxin” 譯佛經中的印度民間故事及其本土化途徑——以愚人故事、智慧故事為中心, in *Chengda zongjiao yu wenhua xuebao*, N. 3, pp. 89–110; Mensikov L.N., 1980, “Les paraboles bouddhiques dans la littérature chinoise, ” in *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême–Orient*, Vol. 67, pp. 303-336.

Story No. 19

某甲者(a)為霸府佐，為人都不解。每至集會，有聲樂之事，已輒豫焉；而耻(b)不解，妓人奏(c)，讚之，己亦學人仰讚和同。(d)時人士令己作主人，并使喚妓客。妓客未集，召妓具問曲吹，一一疏着手巾。(e)箱下先有藥方，客既集，因問命曲，先取所疏者，誤得藥方，便言是疏；方有附子三分, 當歸四分。己云："且作附子, 當歸以送客。"合滿(f)座絕倒。*TPYL* 568. 2570

(a) *WLQ* deletes *zhe* 者.

(b) *OY*：耻

(c) *WLQ* adds *qu* 曲

(d) *WLQ* and *OY* has this punctuation, *LX* : "和。同"

(e) Following *OY*. *WLQ* has "手巾箱下;" *LX* : "箱, 下".

(f) The character *man* 滿 has been deleted in *LX* and *WLQ* ; *OY* deletes *he* 合 .

A certain fellow, a local government bureau assistant (*bafu zuo*),[746] by nature did not understand a thing. Every time he went to social gatherings where there was music or singing, he always joined in; yet he was ashamed he did not understand [them]. [When] the female performers played an air, [he] praised it as the scholars did. One time, the other gentlemen asked him to be the host and to call up the guests and the singers. Before the singers and the guests gathered, he called a singing girl to ask her about the melodies in detail, and recorded them writing them down on a handkerchief. The [handkerchief] box previously had [inside] a medical prescription. When the guests gathered, they asked the title of the melody. He first grasped what he had written down, [but] wrongly took the medical recipe. He then thought that it was what he had written; there was: three *fen* of *Fuzi*[747] and four of *Danggui.*[748] He

[746] The modern scholar Tao Xiandu states that this charge was created by Cao Cao. For reference see Tao Xiandu 陶賢都, 2007, *Wei Jin Nan Beichao Bafu yu Bafu zhengzhi yanjiu* 魏晉南北朝霸府與霸府政治研究, Changsha, Hunan renmin, pp. 12-79.

[747] *Fuzi* 附子 is the lateral root of *Aconitum carmichaeli Debx* (*wutou* 乌头), a perennial herb: it flourishes in autumn and its flower look like monk's shoes so it's called "monk's shoes chrysanthemum."

[748] *Danggui* 當歸 is the radix of the *Angelica Sinensis.* There is a famous story regarding *dangui* herb that involves the founder of Wei Dynasty, Cao Cao, and Taishi Ci 太史慈 (166–206 AD); it reads: "Cao Cao heard about the fame of Ci, he sent him a letter hidden in a small bamboo box. When Taishi Ci opened it, there was nothing written down, [inside the box he found only] *dangui* herb."

said: “And for the pleasure of the guest,[749] the musical performance is ‘Fuzi and Danggui’.” Everyone roared with laughter.

Story No. 20

有人弔喪，并欲齎物助之，問人：“可與何等物？”人答(a)曰：“錢布穀帛，任卿(1)所有耳(2,b)！”因(3)齎大豆一斛(4,c)相與。孝子哭喚(5,d)：“奈何”，己以為問豆，答曰：“可作飯！”(6)孝子復(7)哭喚(8)：“窮”，己曰：“適得便窮，自當更送一斛(9)。”*YWLJ* 85. 1453–54, *TPGJ* 262. 2052

(1) *TPGJ*: *jun* 君

(2) *TPGJ*: *er* 爾

(3) *YWLJ:* records *kun* 困 but in this case is clearly a mistake for *yin* 因

(4) *TPGJ:* “and put [it] in front of the son in mourning, saying: “I have nothing, I help with one *hu* of big beans in your support (*xiang*).” 置孝子前，謂曰：“無可有，以大豆一斛相助。”

(5) *TPGJ: gu* 孤

(6) From *yi* 己 to *fan* 飯 *TPGJ* records: “you [can] make fermented soya beans (*chi*)” 曰造豉.

(7) *TPGJ: you* 又

(8) *TPGJ: gu* 孤

(9) *TPGJ: shi* 石

(a) *WLQ* omits *da* 答

(b) *WLQ* following *TPGJ* writes *er* 爾

(c) *WLQ* writes *yi hu dou* 一斛豆

(d) *WLQ* omits *huan* 喚

曹公聞其名，遺慈書，以篋封之，發省無所道，而但貯當歸; *SGZ* 49. 1190. Cao Cao played with the name of the herb, asking him to go back to his northern court: *danggui* 當歸 “come back.”

[749] About the meaning of the verb *song*, there could be different interpretations; here I translated *song* as “to give to” meaning that the songs will be presented to the guests. Professor Lomova, during a private conversation, suggested that it could be translated as “send off,” implying that the protagonist made a mistake about the title of the air and about the order of the songs of the show. *OY* proposes to read *song* as *songming* 送命 “to court death,” translating “with *fuzi* and *danggui*, dear guests please die;” actually it transforms the phrase in an insult. I think that this is a forced interpretation.

There was a man who was going to pay a condolence visit and wanted to give something to contribute to the sacrificial rites (*zhi*). He asked: "Which kind of thing should I give?" One man answered: "Money, cloth, cereal, silk, whatever you have!" So he gave one *hu*[750] of beans in support [to the mourner]. The mourning son cried loud: "What will I do!!?" The man, thinking that the mourner was asking about the beans, said: "You can prepare a meal!" The son in mourning again cried aloud: "Poor me!!" [751] and that one said: "If I knew you were so poor, I would have given you another *hu* [of beans]!"

[750] The *hu* is a unit for measurement; it corresponds to 20 *l* (Han dynasty) - 20, 45 *l* (Three dynasty), (*HDC*, p. 11).

[751] *Qiong* 窮 in this case is an exclamation to express sadness "I'm finished! (without the beloved one)" but literally it means "poor."

Story No. 21

人有和(a)羹者，以杓嘗之，少鹽，便益之。後復嘗之向杓中者，故云：“鹽不足。”如此數益升許鹽。故不鹹，因以為怪。*TPYL* 861. 3825

(a) *WLQ* has *zhuo* 斫 but it is an error.

A man was seasoning a soup; he tasted it with a ladle and, [thinking that] it was lacking salt, he added it. After, he tasted again from the same liquid left in the centre of the spoon and said: “The salt is still not enough.” So he added it several times till arriving at one *sheng*[752] of salt. But it still seemed to him not to be salty; he thought it was strange.[753]

[752] Unit of measurement , one *sheng* corresponds to 200–204,5 ml.
[753] This story is discussed (with Story No. 18) in Ou Chongjing, 2004, p. 111.

Story 22

甲買肉過入都廁，挂肉著外。乙偷之，未得去，甲出覓肉，因詐便口銜肉云：“挂著外門，何得不失？若如我銜肉着口，豈有失理?”

TPYL 862. 3835; *BTSC* 145. 610

A bought some meat and, while he was passing through the city, he entered a public lavatory and hung the meat outside. B stole it, but when he was about to go away, A came out looking for the meat. So, holding the meat in his mouth, [B] calmly bluffed: “If you hang the meat outside, how can you not lose it? Like me, [instead], holding the meat in my mouth, how could it be possible to lose it!”

Story No. 23

有甲欲謁見邑宰，問左右曰：“令何所好？”或語曰：“好公羊傅。”後入見，令問：“君讀何書？”荅曰：“唯業公羊傅。”試問：“誰殺陳他者(a)？”甲良久對曰：“平生實不殺陳他(a)。”令察謬誤，因復戲之曰：“君不殺陳他，請是誰殺？”於是太(b)怖，徒跣走出。人問其故，乃大語曰：“見明府，便以死事見訪，後直不敢復來，遇赦當出耳。”*TPGJ* 260. 2026

(a) *WLQ* and *OY* write “Chen Tuo” 陳佗 maybe following the name recorded in the *Gongyang zhuan*.

(b) *WLQ* and *OY* write *da* 大.

There was A who desired to have an audience with the county magistrate (*yizai*). He asked the people around him: “What does the magistrate like?” Someone said: “He likes the *Gongyang zhuan*.”[754] Thereafter, he went to his presence. The magistrate asked: “Which kind of book do you read, Sir?” he answered: “I only read the *Gongyang zhuan*.” The magistrate tested him asking: “Who killed Chen Ta?”[755] That man, after a good while, answered: “I never killed him!” The magistrate understood the error, so again he made fun of him saying: “If you didn’t kill him, who did then?” The man was then incredibly frightened. He left [the place] bare foot and ran out. The people asked him the reason [of his haste], and he loudly said: “I went to see the county magistrate and he questioned me about a murder; I’ll never dare to go there again, and I’ll go out again only after an amnesty [will be promulgated]. ”

[754] The *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳, along with the *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳 and the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 is a commentary on the *Chunqiu* 春秋, the *Spring and Autumn annals*. Traditionally is ascribed to Gongyang Gao 公羊高, a disciple of Zixia 子夏.

[755] Chen Ta 陳他 (754–706 B.C.) (as this name is recorded in the *SJ* 46. 1880, called also Duke Li 厲公) or Chen Tuo 陳佗. The *Gongyang zhuan* at the sixth year of Duke Huan 桓公records: “The people of Cai killed Chen Tuo” 蔡人殺陳佗, *GYZ* 4. 101. This was the right answer to the magistrate’s question. Chen Tuo was the son of Duke Wen of the state of Chen and the younger brother of Duke Huan of Chen 陳桓公. When Duke Huan was very ill he took the chance to make him be killed together with the crown prince Mian, by the people of Cai, and took his place in the government. Chen Lin 陳林, the son of Duke Huan, after made him be killed by Cai’s people as well. He became the Duke Zhuang 莊公; see *SJ* 46. 1879–80.

Story No. 24

甲父母在，出學三年而歸，舅氏問其學何得，并序別父久。乃答曰：“渭陽之思，過於秦康。”既而父數之：“爾學奚益？”答曰：“少失過庭之訓，故學無益。”*TPGJ* 262. 2052

When A's parents were still alive, after having studied away from home for three years, A came back. His uncle asked him what he had acquired from his studies, and [asked him] to write something to express his feelings for having been far from his father for so long. The man then answered: "In my feelings at the northern bank of the Wei river, I surpass the Duke Kang of Qin."[756] Subsequently, the father scolded him: "What good was it for that you studied!!" He answered: "When I was young, I lost the instruction from my father,[757] this is the reason why I studied without profit".

Comment

In this text there are two allusions to early texts, and only by knowing both of them can one truly understand the humour contained in the story. In the first part, the uncle from the mother's side (*jiu* 舅) asks the protagonist to show his acquired knowledge by expressing his longing for his father. The nephew answers citing a passage from the *Odes*. The poem in question is "Weiyang," which talks about the Duke Kang of Qin 秦康公 (? –609 BC) who was the nephew of Duke Wen of Jin 晉文公, Chonger 重耳 (697–628 BC). Kang's mother was the sister of Chong Er and she died longing to see her brother again. Her son, then, when the Duke of Jin was about to go back to

[756] The Duke Kang of Qin 秦康公 (?–609 BC) was the nephew of Duke Wen of Jin 晉文公, Chonger 重耳(697–628 BC). He bid farwell to him going back to his state on the Weiyang river's shore. On that occasion, it is said that he composed the "Weiyang" 渭陽 poem, preserved in the *Shijing* 詩經 at the "Qin feng" 秦風section: "I escorted the Uncle as far as Weiyang, […] I followed the Uncle, long did I think of him" 我送舅氏，曰至渭阳。[…]我送舅氏，悠悠我思。*Shj*, pp. 358–59; trans. Karlgren 1950, p. 87 (poem number 134). In the *Shijing yizhu*, Zhou Zhenfu translates: "long I think about my mother;" Zhou Zhenfu, 2002, p. 187. This last translation acknowledges the traditional interpretation of the poem, according to which the Duke Kang expressed in the verses the feelings of his mother towards her brother, the Duke of Jin. Because she died without seeing her brother again, when her son, the Duke Kang, bid farewell to his uncle his feelings embodied his mother's ones and at the same time he was thinking about her. On the complexity of this poem's exegesis see Li Shan, 2003, p. 173.

[757] The phrase – *guo ting zhi xun* 過庭之訓– stands for "father's teachings," and comes from the *Lunyu* 16.13, where Chen Kang 陳亢asked to Boyu 伯魚, Confucius' son, which kind of teachings he received from his father, *LY* 16/13. 172.

his own state, bid farewell to him composing a poem in which he was expressing both her mother's feelings toward his brother and his feelings toward his mother. This poem came to represent the "parental love between nephew and uncle." Thus it is not by chance, that in this story the question setting off the narration is asked by the maternal uncle. The presence of the uncle gives an indication about the understanding of the story. The nephew makes a mistake mentioning that passage of the *Odes*; he clearly shows his ignorance about its context, proving to his father that he did not really learn a lot. The story also suggests that his father, in contrast, knew the right meaning of the quotation. Subsequently, the son defends himself quoting a passage from the *Lunyu*, implying that he had a bad father who did not teach him anything during his youth, and this is the reason why he studied without profit.

Story No. 25

甲與乙鬬爭，甲嗑下乙鼻。官吏欲斷之，甲稱乙自嗑落。吏曰：“夫人鼻高耳口低，豈能就嗑之乎？”甲曰：“他踏床子就嗑之。”*TPGJ* 262. 2052

A was fighting with B, when A gnawed off B’s nose. The government official wanted to settle it, but A said that B bit his own nose. The official said: “In a man’s [face], the nose is up and the mouth is down; how is it possible that he bit it [himself]?” A answered: “He stepped on the bed and bit it.”

Story No. 26

傖人欲相共吊喪，各不知儀。一人言粗習，謂同伴曰：“汝隨我舉止。”既至喪所，舊習者在前，伏席上，餘者一一相髡於背；而為首者. 以足觸詈曰：“癡物！”諸人亦為儀當爾，各以足相踏曰：“癡物！”最後者近孝子。亦踏孝子而曰：“癡物！”*TPGJ* 262. 2052–53

Some vulgar fellows[758] wanted to go together to pay a condolence visit, [but] none knew the etiquette. One said that he had understood it a bit, and said to his companion: “You follow my conduct.” When they arrived at the place of mourning, the one with a former knowledge stayed ahead and bowed in front of the mat of honour; the remaining [fellows], each one after another, banged their shaved head against the back of the one standing in front of them; and the one who stayed ahead, trampling on the foot [of the one behind him], cursed saying: “Idiot!” Everyone, thinking that was part of the etiquette, stepping on each other's feet, screamed: “Idiot!” The latter was near to the son in mourning. He stepped on the son’s foot and said: “Idiot!”

[758] *Cangren* 傖人 “vulgar man”; in the story n. 16 the term has a geographic connotation but in this case it means only “vulgar.”, see *SSXY* 6/18. 360, n. 2.

Story No. 27

有癡壻，婦翁死，婦教以行吊禮。於路值水，乃脫襪而渡，惟遺一襪。又覩林中鳩鳴云：“嘓鴣嘓鴣！”而私誦之，都忘吊禮。及至，乃以有襪一足立，而縮其跣者，但云：“嘓鴣嘓鴣！”孝子皆笑。又曰：“莫笑莫笑！如拾得襪，即還我。”*TPGJ* 262. 2053

There was a stupid bridegroom whose father in law had passed away, and his wife taught him how to behave during a mourning visit. On [his] way [to the funeral], he came across a river, so he took off [his] socks and crossed it, but he lost one of them. After, he saw [some] turtledoves crying in the woods and said: “Gu! Gu!” Repeating it to himself, he completely forgot about the mourning etiquette. Once he arrived, standing on the foot with the sock and withdrawing the one barefooted, he just said: “Gu! Gu!” All the sons in mourning laughed. He then said: “Don’t laugh, don’t laugh! If you have found [my] sock, give [it] back to me.”

Comment

This story, analogously to Story No. 13, concerns the motif of the “stupid son in law.”[759]

[759] Ding Naitong does not record it in his motif index but discusses it in his article, “A Comparative Study of the Three Chinese and North–American Indian Folktale Types.” Here, he ascribes it to the motif of the “forgetful fool” (J2671) and to the tale type “The forgotten word” (1687); see Ding Naitong, 1985, pp. 43-44.

Story No. 28

有人常食蔬茹，忽食羊肉，夢五臟神曰：“羊踏破菜園！”*GZJ* 13. 34

There was a man who was always eating vegetables, [one day] he unexpectedly ate sheep meat and he dreamt the gods of the five internal organs[760] saying [to him]: “The sheep trampled on the vegetable garden!”

Comment

The *Ganzhuji* 紺珠集 ascribes this story to Lu Yun 陸雲 ’s *Xiaolin.*

[760] In the daoist religion every internal organ has a patron deity, one for the kidney, the lung, the liver, the heart, the kidney and one for the spleen.

Appendix B:

Shiji 史記, *juan* 126

"Guji liezhuan" 滑稽列傳

Biographies of ironical critics

不流世俗，不爭埶利，上下無所凝滯，人莫之害，以道之用。作滑稽列傳第六十六.

SJ 130. 3318

"(Those people) were not dragged down by the customs of their times, nor did they fight for power or profit. Above and below there was no barrier for them which could hold them back. They did no harm to any man since they practised the Way."[761]

[126. 3198] Confucius said: "Regarding the government [of a state], as Six Disciplines[762] are concerned, they all are equally important. The *Rites* helps to give rules to men, the *Music* promotes harmony, the *Documents* records events, the *Songs* helps to express ideas, the *Change* reveals supernatural influences, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* shows what is right." The Grand Historian comments: the Way of Heaven is infinitely vast, how can it be not great! Even the speeches may subtly hit their marks and serve to settle disputes.[763]

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*Editions used: Sima Qian 司馬遷 (?145–?86 BC), *Shiji* 史記, Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1975; Takigawa Kametarō 瀧川龜太郎, *Shiki kaichū kōshō* 史記會注考證 10 vols. Tōhō bunka gakuin, Tokyo kenkyū jō, 1999; Yang Yanqi 楊燕起, *Shiji quanyi* 史記全譯, Guiyang, Guizhou renmin, 2001; Hao Zhida 郝志達, and Yang Zhongxian 楊鍾賢, *Shiji: wenbai duizhao* 史記：文白對照, Taibei, Jian hong, 1995; Yang, Gladys and Hsien-yi Yang, *Records of the Historian*, Hong Kong, Commercial Press (Translations of selected passages. Not annotated), 1974.

[761] Based on Pokora, 1973, p. 54.

[762] They are the Six Classics and their commentaries. The *Shiji zhengyi* says: "As the Six Disciplines are concerned, even if the content is different, the *Rites* regulate, the *Music* harmonizes, [they] lead people and establish the government, the *tianxia* is calmed down and returns on the right way. As for the subtle sayings that can hit their target, they can serve to settle disorders, therefore, for the government [of a state], they are equal important;" *SJ* 126. 3197, n. 1.

[763] Takigawa (1999, p. 5032) quotes Zeng Guofan 曾国藩 that says: "The words [of Sima Qian] do not stress the benefits of the Six Classics regarding the government of the state, but stress the *guji* (humorous) wits that hit their marks. They benefit the Way of government. "

Chunyu Kun[764] was a man of Qi who lived with his wife's family.[765] He was less than seven *chi* tall,[766] a witty person and a good debater, [so] he was sent several times as an envoy to [the states of other] feudal lords and never failed a mission. King Wei of Qi (378 BC–320 BC)[767] liked riddles and was so given up to pleasure that he [often] spent the whole night drinking. He was so intoxicated by alcohol that he was not able to govern and had to entrust the affairs of state to his ministers. All the officials indulged in licentious attitudes and the feudal lords invaded [the state]. The state [of Qi] was in imminent danger of destruction, yet, from morning to evening, none of his favourite courtiers dared to remonstrate. [Then] Chunyu Kun [tried to] persuade[768] the King with a riddle: "In the kingdom there is a big bird. It has alighted on the royal court. For three years it has neither spread its wings nor cried out. Do you know why it is doing it?"[769] The King replied: "This bird may not have flown yet, once it does, it will soar into the sky. It may not have cried out yet, but once it does, it will astound everyone." Then he summoned all the seventy-two prefecture's magistrates to court, rewarded one, punished another, and led out his army. The feudal lords were alarmed and returned to Qi the land that they had overrun. King Wei ruled for thirty-six years, **[3197]** as is recorded in the Biography of Tian Wan.[770]

In the eighth year of King Wei's reign (371 BC), Chu dispatched troops against Qi.[771] The King of Qi sent Chunyu Kun to Zhao to ask for aid, and [for this

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[764] Guang Shaokui (2004, p. 15) says that from the protagonist name, Kun 髡, is possible to know that he was from a low social class. Kun was an ancient punishment consisting in shaving off the head of a criminal.

[765] From this account we can acknowledge that his social status was quite low (Guang Shaokui 2004, p. 15). Nevertheless Liu Xiang recorded that Chunyu was a *boshi*, a position that during Warring States period was considered as a high rank official (Guang Shaokui, 2004, p. 15). He was also a member of Jixia Academy. Sima Qian records his biography at *SJ* 74. 2346.

[766] During Zhou times one *chi* 尺 corresponded to 23,1cm. During Han times to 21,35-23,75 cm, (*HDC*, p. 3).

[767] Guang Shaokui says that at this time Chunyu Kun was already a member of Jixia Academy (Guang Shaokui, 2004, p. 16).

[768] Here the character *shui/shuo* 說 has to be read as *shui* " to persuade."

[769] This story is told in the *Shiji*'s "Annals of Chu" 楚世家 but here the protagonist is Wu Ju 伍舉 not Chunyu Kun; *SJ* 40. 170. For further information see Takigawa, 1999, p. 5033. This riddle appears also in the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 at the "Yulao" 喻老 chapter (story n.19), *HFZ* 8/21. 973. In Liu Xiang 劉向's *Xinxu* 新序, at the "Zashier" 雜事二 chapter, Chunyu Kun asks three more riddles to Zou Ji 鄒忌; *XX* 2. 71-72. See also *LSCQ* 18/102. 6 translated by Schaberg, 2005b, pp. 204-205.

[770] See "Tian Jing Zhong Wan shijia" 田敬仲完世家 chapter, *Shiji*, 46. 1888-1895 and "Mengzi Xunqing liezhuan" 孟子荀卿列傳 chapter, *SJ* 74. 2346.

[771] Qian Daxin 錢大昕 states that, according to the Hereditary Houses and the Annals, that year Chu did not send troops against Qi; see Takigawa 1999, p. 5034.

purpose gave Chun] one hundred catties of gold and ten four-horse carriages. Chunyu Kun looked up to the sky and laughed so hard that the cord of his hat snapped. The king asked: "Do you think this is too little, sir?" Chun replayed: "How dare I!" So the king said: "But you are laughing, is it possible that you have something to say?" Kun then answered: "As your minister came here today from the East, he saw on the road a man invoking blessing for a good harvest. Offering one pig's trotter and one cup of wine, he prayed: 'May the crops from the highlands fill completely the bamboo baskets. May the crops[772] from the lowlands fill completely the carts. May grain grow luxuriant, and in abundance fill my house.' Your minister saw that what he offered was so little but what he expected in return was so much, this is the reason why I laughed." So King Wei of Qi gave him one thousand *yi*[773] of gold, ten pairs of white jade disks and one hundred four-horses carriages. Chunyu Kun left and made his way to Zhao. The King of Zhao provided him with one hundred thousand selected troops and one thousand war-chariots bound with leather. Once the state of Chu knew this, it withdrew the army by night and made them go back to Chu.[774]

[3199] King Wei was very happy,[775] he set up a banquet in the inner palace and summoned Chunyu Kun offering him wine. He asked: "How much does it take to make you drunk, Sir?" Kun answered: "Your minister can get drunk by drinking one *dou* to one *shi*.[776]" King Wei replied: "If one *dou* makes you drunk, How can you drink one *shi*? Is it possible to hear an explanation for that ?" Kun answered: "When I am offered wine in Your Majesty's presence, with the law officer besides[777] me and the royal scribes[778] behind, I drink bowing my head and trembling with fear, and less than one *dou* makes me drunk. When my family entertains respected guests, I roll up my sleeves, I kneel, and offer them wine; if they frequently give me the dregs and repeatedly propose a toast to their health, keeping me jumping up all the time, less than two *dou* makes me drunk. If suddenly I run into my friend

[772] The *Shiji suoyin* says that *wuxie* 汙邪 means "the low lands" (*xiaditian* 下地田), in this fields grows *xin* 薪 "firewood;" *SJ* 126. 3198, n. 4.
[773] *Yi* 溢 here means *yi* 鎰: an ancient unit of weight corresponding to 20 or 40 *liang* 兩.
[774] The *Shuoyuan* 說苑 at the "Zunxian" 尊賢 chapter records this fact but in a different way; Takigawa, 1999 , p. 5034.
[775] Here the caracther *shuo/shui* 說 has to be read as *yue* 悅 or "to like, to be pleased , happy".
[776] One *dou* corresponds to 2 *l*, one *shi* is 20 *l* (*HDC*, p. 8).
[777] According to Hucker (1985, p. 157, entry n° 973): the official variant designation of Censor.
[778] Hucker 1985, p. 592, entry n° 8167.

or acquaintance, whom I haven't seen for years and we talk cheerfully about old times, being able to say just what we think, I can drink five or six *dou* before getting drunk. In country fairs where men and women sit together and the wine goes round and round, we play *liubo* [779](game of checkers) or *touhu* [780](cottabus), choosing our own patterns, and there is no punishment for holding hands and no taboo for looking into each other's eyes. First the women's earrings start to drop, then [men's] hairpins are lost. At that time I secretly rejoice and I can drink eight *dou* and be barely one-third tipsy. At dusk towards the end of the feast, we sit side by side mixing the wine left; men and women share one mat, shoes and slippers intermingled, cups and dishes everywhere. Then as the candles in the hall extinguish their flames, my host sees the other guests out but keeps me. As the silk blouse [of the woman] parts,[781] I briefly inhale her fragrance, in that instant there is such joy in my heart that I can drink one *shi*. This is the reason why it is said that 'too much wine leads to licence and too much joy to sorrow.' This is true for everything. These words mean that it is not right go to the extreme; once you reach it, decline follows." Kun was using this speech to admonish the King. The King of Qi said: "You are right." So he gave up his nightly drinking, and he made Chunyu Kun the officer in charge of the reception[782] of the feudal lords of other states. [From that time on] the jester Kun was invited to all the feasts given by members of the royal clan.

[3200] More than one hundred years after this happened,[783] at Chu lived the jester Meng. Meng, the jester, was a musician of Chu. He was eight *chi* tall, and a prolific debater. He often remonstrated by means of jests. During the reign of King Zhuang of Chu (?–591), there was a horse that the King especially loved: he

[779] *Liubo* 六博 is an ancient game: two people play, there are 12 chessmen, 6 white and 6 black, every player has 6 chessmen, therefore the name.
[780] A game played during a feast; the winner was decided by the number of arrows thrown into a distant pot.
[781] Here it is not made explicit, but the host arranges for Chunyu Kun a women for the night; see Yang Yanqi, 2001, p. 4322. However, some translators interpret the host as the female with whom Chunyu Kun passes the night. For example, Knechtges translates the passage as: "Candles in the hall extinguished/The host sends off the others but has me stay./The collar of her gauze blouse is loosened,/I smell a faint aroma of perfume;" Knechtges, 1970-71, pp. 84-85.
[782] *Zhuke* 主客: during the Warring States period was a title of a government position; during the Qin and Han dynasties this office became one of the nine great ministers of the state. According to the *Shiji zhengyi* during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han it was called *dahonglu* 大鴻臚; *SJ* 126. 3200, n. 5. See also Hucker, 1985, p. 181.
[783] Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 states that the jester Meng lived two hundred years before Chunyu Kun, and not after him. Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩 says that from the reign of King Zhuang of Chu to that of King Wei of Qi, it passed 271 years; see Takigawa, 1999, p. 5036.

caparisoned with embroidered silk, housed in magnificent quarters, with a mat to sleep on and fed it upon dried jujubes. When the horse, being too fat, felt ill and died, the king ordered his ministers to arrange for it the funeral matters. He decided to have it buried in a double coffin with all the rites befitting a high official. Many of his courtiers opposed this, considering it inappropriate. The king decreed: "The one who dare to remonstrate on the matter of the horse, will be put to death." When the jester Meng heard about it, he went to the palace. He looked up to the sky and cried loudly. The king was surprised and asked him the reason [of his crying]. The jester Meng said: "That horse was Your Majesty's favourite, a great state like Chu can be able to get everything done. However, to bury it with the rites befitting a high official is too ungenerous. Why don't you inhume it according to royal rites?" The King said: "How can it be done?" Meng replied: "Your minister suggests that the inner coffin has to be made of carved jade and the outer coffin made of the finest catalpa's wood, and the layers that have to protect the coffin might be made of cedar, Sweetgum, camphor three and other precious wood. Send armoured soldiers to excavate the coffin pit, while the old and weak will carry earth. Let the envoys from Qi and Zhao stay ahead co-presiding the sacrificial rites, and the envoys of Han and Wei stay behind to protect.[784] Establish an ancestral temple,[785] sacrifice a *tailao*,[786] and institute a feud of ten thousand households to provide the offerings. [When] the feudal lords will hear of this, they will know that Your Majesty despises men but cherishes horses." The King said: "Did I go this far? What can I do?" The jester Meng said: "I request Your Majesty to bury the horse like the other livestocks.[787] Use the fireplace as its outer coffin and bronze cauldron[788] as its inner coffin, present it with ginger and jujubes and give it magnolia bark. Offer a sacrifice of glutinous rice, caparison it with flames and bury it in men's bellies!" So the King gave the horse to the official in charge of the Palace food, and didn't let the kingdom hear for long about this fact.

[784] The *Shiji jijie* says that at the time of King Zhuang of Chu there were not such states like Zhao, Han and Wei. The *Shiji suoyin* states that maybe this passage is a later addition; *SJ* 126. 3201, n. 3.
[785] To worship the deceased horse.
[786] The animals used in *tailao* offering are an ox, a sheep and a pig.
[787] *Liuchu* 六畜 are the six domestic animals: the horse, the ox, the sheep, the chicken, the dog and the pig; Yang Yanqi, 2001, p. 4325.
[788] The *Shiji suoyin* says that *li* 歷 is equal to *li* 鬲, a type of cooking tripod; *SJ* 126. 3201, n. 5.

[3201] Sunshu Ao (630 BC–593 BC),[789] the prime minister of Chu, knew that [the jester Meng] was a virtuous man and respected him. When he felt ill and about to die, he warned his son saying: "After my death you will certainly be poor. Go to jester Meng and tell him 'I'm the son of Sunshu Ao'." A few years later, when the young man was reduced by poverty to carrying firewood, he ran into Meng and said to him: "I am Sunshu Ao's son. When my father was dying he told me to come to you if I ever was in difficulties." Jester Meng said: "Do not go in places too far away." So he wore Sunshu Ao's clothes and hat, and clapping his hands [began to] talk.[790] In a year or so, he resembled so close Sunshu Ao that neither the King nor his courtiers could tell the difference. [One day] the King had a drinking banquet and Meng stepped forward to offer a toast. The King was amazed, [and] imagining that this was Sunshu Ao returned to life,[791] he wanted to appoint him prime minister. Meng the jester said: "Please let me go back and talk it over with my wife. After three days I will come back to become prime minister." The King granted him the permission to do so. Three days later, the jester Meng came back. The King asked: "What did your wife say?" Meng answered: "My wife said me to be sure to not accept. It is not worth it to be the prime minister of Chu. For example, when Sunshu Ao was the prime minister of Chu, he was utterly loyal and honest in serving the state of Chu, [so] the king of Chu became an hegemon. [However], now that he is dead, his son is so poor that he owns not an inch of land. He is reduced to carrying firewood for a living. [If to be prime minister means] to be like Sunshu Ao, suicide is certainly better." Then he chanted: "Living in the hills and ploughing the field it is rough, and it is hard to get food. Once I become an official, I might become insatiably avaricious in accumulating wealth, regardless of shame. Once I die, I might leave my family well-off, or for taking bribes and breaking the law, I could be put to death and my clan wiped out. How can it be possible to be a rapacious official! I think of being an incorruptible official, who abides by the law, does his duty, and until the end of his life do not dare to change. How can it be possible to be a incorrupt official! The prime minister of Chu, Sunshu Ao, was honest to the end of

[789] For the biography of Sunshu Ao see *Shiji* 's "Xunli liezhuan" 循吏列傳 (Biography of upright officials), *SJ* 119. 3099.
[790] This phrase means that Meng is imitating Sunshu Ao's way to talk and behaviour.
[791] Liu Zhiji questions this passage: as Sunshu Ao died long time before this happened, how was it possible that the King thought he could be still alive? Nakai Riken 中井積德 (中井履軒) believes that here it means that the King liked the Sunshu Ao-appearance of Meng, he didn't actually thought that Sunshu Ao was still alive, Takigawa, 1999, p. 5039.

his life, [but] now his wife and son are poverty-stricken and have to carry firewood to subsist. It's not worth to be like him!"[792] **[3202]** So King Zhuang apologized to Meng. He then summoned Sunshu Ao's son and gave him a fief of four hundred households in Jinqiu, so that he could sacrifice to his ancestors. And his line continued for ten generations. This was a matter of knowing the appropriate time to speak.[793]

More than two hundred years later, at Qin there was the jester Zhan.[794] The jester Zhan was a dwarf entertainer of Qin. He was good at making jokes which, nevertheless, were in accordance with the Great *Dao's* teachings. At the time of the First Emperor of Qin, a drinking banquet was held while it was raining, and the guards by the steps were all soaked and shivering with cold. The jester Zhan saw them and pitied them. He asked: "Would you like a rest?" The guards all answered: "We certainly would!" The jester Zhan said: "Then, when I call you, answer quickly." After a while, in the upper palace a toast was offered to the Emperor, wishing him a long life. Jester Zhan walked to the balustrade and called: "Guards!" They promptly responded "Here!" Jester Zhan said: "Although you are tall, what benefit did you get? You luckily stand in rain. Although I am short, I luckily rest here." Upon that, the Emperor ordered the guards to serve in two shifts.

Once the First Emperor of Qin (259 BC–210 BC) deliberated that he wanted to extend his imperial park to the East till it reaches the Hangu pass,[795] and to the West till it reaches Yong and Chencan. The jester Zhan commented: "Very good! And fill it with animals. If invaders **[3203]** come from the East, let the deers with their horns [block them], it will be enough." Thereupon the Emperor abandoned his plan.

When the Second Emperor (r. 210 BC–207 BC) came to the throne, he decided to lacquer the walls [of his capital]. The jester Zhan said: "Splendid! If you had not ordered this, Your minister would have certainly proposed it. Lacquer the

[792] Liang Yusheng says that this Meng's story is not historically reliable; Takigawa, 1999, p. 5040.
[793] The *Shiji zhengyi* mentions the *Lüshi chunqiu* where is told the story of Sunshu Ao, but jester Meng does not appear; *SJ* 126. 3202, n. 3.
[794] Cui Shi 崔適 says that, according to history, Zhan lived three hundred and seventy eight years after Meng; Takigawa, 1999, p. 5041.
[795] Strategic pass in today Henan province.

walls, although it will cause suffering and costs to people, but what a fine thing it will be! A lacquered wall is so bright and shiny that if enemies come, they will not be able to climb it. If You desire it, it will be done, [but] lacquering is easy, the only difficulty will be building a shelter large enough to dry it." So the Second Emperor laughed at it (this wit), and gave up this idea. Soon afterwards the Second Emperor was killed and the jester Zhan came over to Han dynasty. A few years later he died.

The Grand Historian comments: Chunyu Kun looked up to the sky and laughed loudly, and King Wei of Qi became a mighty monarch. The jester Meng shook his head and sang, and a firewood vender was enfeoffed. The jester Zhan called down from the balustrade, and the guard was reduced by half. Is that not splendid!

Chu Shaosun said: This minister, thank to his knowledge in the Classics and their arts, became an official, and he likes to read the transmitted words of other traditions. [796] He overrated his ability, and, in addition, wrote six *zhang* of *guji* stories, adding them on the left (that is after those written by the Grand Historian). It is possible to read them to stimulate the feelings, to show to later generations that those who had a fondness for curious facts read them, and [also] to make people fancy. in particular, to support the last three stories written by the Grand Historian.

[3204] At the time of Emperor Wu of Han,[797] there was an entertainer who received the favour of the Emperor, his name was Guo.[798] When he was speaking or narrating [stories], although his words did not conform to the great *Dao*, he was able to make the Emperor happy.[799] When the Emperor Wu was young, the wet-nurse

[796] The *Shiji suoying* said that the text here is referring to the stories about Dong Fangshuo and other characters; *SJ* 126. 3203, n. 1. The records about them do not appear in the Classics (*zheng jing* 正經). Gu Ninglin 顧寧林 says that with *waijiashu* 外家書 are meant all the works that are not included in the Six Classics (*liujing* 六經); Takigawa, 1999, p. 5042.

[797] This story is told also in one anecdote of the *Shishuo xinyu* 世说新语 but the protagonist is Dong Fangshuo; see *SSXY* 10/1. 548.

[798] Guo *sheren* 郭舍人 is probably not a real name. *Sheren* for some commentators refers to a man who has different kinds of skills; Yang Yanqi, 2001, p. 4331, n. 4. Schaberg translates as "Member of the suite;" Schaberg, 2005b, p. 200. This character in the *Shiji* appears only in this passage. We find attendant Guo in the *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記, *juan* 5: "At the time of Emperor Wu, there was Sheren who was good at play *touhu*, he used arrows made of bamboo" 武帝時，郭舍人善投壺，以竹為矢; *TPYL* 753. 3343. He also appears in the *Hanshu* in the biography of Dongfang Shuo, *HS* 65. 2844.

[799] Here the character *shuo* 說 has to be read as y*ue* 悅.

Hou of Dongwu province was in charge to raise him. When the Emperor Wu grew up, he named her "Great Wet-nurse." She used to go to the imperial court two times a month, [and every time] the court favourite Ma Youqing, for imperial decree, was in charge of granting the wet-nurse of 50 pieces of silk, and of providing food and drink to offer her. The wet-nurse submitted a memorial to the Emperor saying: "Everywhere there are cultivated plots; I wish I will obtain one." The Emperor said: "Does the wet-nurse desire to receive this?" and he gave it [to her]. The words said by the wet-nurse, never failed to be heard. Following this, an imperial edict was issued to let the wet-nurse's carriage walk the imperial road. At that time, all the high rank officials and ministers respected the wet-nurse. The members of the wet-nurse's family, children and grand–children, slaves and servants tyrannized Chang'an. Holding the reins of government, they were robbing other people's carriages and taking by force other people's clothes and belongings. When this news arrived at court, [the Emperor] did not bear to punish [her] according to the law. Some officials asked to exile the wet-nurse's family and settle them near the border. The Emperor approved it. The wet-nurse went to the imperial palace to go to Emperor Wu's presence to say goodbye. First she met the attendant Guo and cried. He said: "Go right away to see [the Emperor] to say good-bye, [then] quickly leave turning your head looking at him several times." The wet-nurse did what he said. She went to bid farewell to the Emperor and quickly left turning her head several times. The attendant Guo rapidly insulted her saying: "Tsz! Old woman! Why don't you leave quickly! Your Majesty is already grown-up. Do you really think that he still needs your milk to live? Why do you still turn your head!" Hence, the Emperor felt sorry for her and began to be sad; thus he issued an imperial edict which did not allow the wet-nurse's family to be exiled, and punished those who had calumniated her.

[3205] At the time of the Emperor Wu, among the men of Qi there was one called Dongfang Shuo (154–93 BC).[800] He liked the books that were transmitted from ancient times. He was fond of the Classics and the arts [of the Ru scholars], [but] he was paying more attention to the words of the other traditions. As soon as he entered in Chang'an, he went to the *gongche*[801] office to present a memorial to the

[800]His biography is found at *HS* 65. 2841-2874.
[801] According to Hucker (1985, pp. 290-91, entry n° 3394): Gate Traffic Control Office, one at each of the 4 gates of the imperial palace, responsible for accepting certain kinds of memorials and tribute

Emperor. The document consisted of three thousand bamboo slips. The *gongche* official sent two men to carry Dongfang Shuo's document, and they were barely able to lift it. The Emperor read it in his inner palace. When he needed to stop reading it, he scratched a sign on it. He took two months to read the whole memorial. [The Emperor Wu] ordered to appoint [Dongfang Shuo] as a gentleman (*lang*),[802] and he was constantly near the Emperor to serve him.

Several times he was asked to go in the presence of the Emperor to talk, and never let the Emperor Wu be unhappy. The Emperor frequently issued an imperial edict to grant him the opportunity to eat in the Emperor's presence. [Every time] after the meal, Dongfang Shuo collected in his bosom the food left over, making his dress dirty.

The Sovereign several times gave him pieces of silk. [Every time] he put them on his shoulder and left. He used the money made from the silk to marry a young girl, one of the most beautiful of Chang'an. After one year he abandoned her and married another one. All the wealth the Emperor bestowed him was spent on women.

Among the courtiers that were around the Emperor, half of them called him "the fool." When Emperor Wu heard about this, he said: "If Dongfang Shuo would not adopt this loose conduct, how could it be possible for you even to compare to him?" Dongfang Shuo recommended his son for an official position as gentleman (*lang*) and again for the position of Receptionist of the Palace attendant (*shiyezhe),*[803] and frequently he was sent on diplomatic missions.

[One day] Dongfang Shuo passed through the hall of the palace and the officials said to him: "Everyone considers you a fool, Mister." Dongfang Shuo replied: "The men like me are those that live like recluses in the imperial court. The men of ancient times [instead] lived in reclusion in the remote mountains."

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articles intended for the Emperor and for maintaining vehicles in readiness to fetch personages summoned to court.

[802] According to Hucker (1985, p. 301, entry n° 3563): "generic term for court attendants from various sources including sons of eminent officials, men specially recommended by regional and local authorities and experienced officials awaiting reappointment."

[803] According to Hucker (1985, p. 577, entry n° 7908): "Receptionist," designation of officials with functions resembling those of butlers, masters of ceremonies, ushers, messangers; in Han it was specified that they be chosen from among young court attendants who had fine beards and loud voices. *Shi* 侍 is *shizhong* 侍中, "palace attendant."

Frequently during a feast, drinking free from inhibitions, he would sit on the floor singing: "I live in seclusion in the common customs.[804] I live as a recluse at Jinma gate. Inside the halls of the imperial palace it is possible to live in seclusion and protect oneself. There is no need to [live] in the remote mountains. My thatched cottage is here below." The Jinma Gate is the gate of the officials; at a side of it there is a horse made of bronze; this is the reason why it is called "The gate of the metal horse."

[804] Literally *lushen* 陸沈 means "to fall and sink," a metaphor for "to live in seclusion;" Hao Zhida and Yang Zhongxian, 1995, p. 524, n. 22.

Appendix C

*Wenxin diaolong*文心彫龍
The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons
"Xieyin" 諧隱 (Humour and Enigma), chapter 15

[3/15. 194] The Ode of Rui Liangfu 芮良夫[805] says: "He holds only to his own thoughts, and causes the people to be distracted. "[806] The heart of the monarch is dangerous like a mountain,[807] and the mouths [of people are difficult] to stop like [the flow] of a river; emotion of hatred and anger differs [from man to man], in a similar way there are several words for joy and jokes. In ancient times, Hua Yuan 華元 got rid of his armour, [808] and the men who were building the city's wall composed the "Hanmu" 睅目 (Bulging eyes) song.[809] Zang He 臧紇[810] was defeated in a battle, and the people of the state composed the "Zhuru" 侏儒 (Dwarf) song.[811] [These examples] sneer at the appearance, the resentment nurtured inside is expressed by poking fun [at the target]. As far as the proverb "Canxie" 蠶蟹 (Silk

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* Editions used: Huang Shulin 黃叔琳 and Li Xiang 李詳, *[Zengding] Wenxin diaolong [xiaozhu]* 增訂文心彫龍校注, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000, pp. 194-204; Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫, Liu Xie 劉勰 (456–522), *Wenxin diaolong [jinyi]* 文心彫龍今譯 Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1986, pp. 130-137; Shih, Vincent Yu-chung (translation. and comm.) *The Literary Mind and the carving of Dragons*, Hong kong,The Chinese University Press, 1983, pp. 154-163.

[805] He was a high official during the reign of King Li of Zhou 周厲王 (r. 853–842 BC); according to the tradition, he wrote this poem to admonish his king (*Shj*, p. 867). In the *Zuozhuan* is called "the poem of Rui Liangfu," see *WXDL* 3/15. 195 (note).

[806] *Shijing* 詩經, "Daya"大雅 section, "Sang Rou" 桑柔 poem (n. 257); *ShJ*, p. 874, trans. Legge, 1879 (on-line edition). Karlgren (1950, p. 222) translates: "He has his own (lung and intestines) inner thoughts, and (makes) considers the people utterly foolish."

[807] The text refers to King Li of Zhou, to whom is addressed the poem from the Odes; Zhou Zhenfu, 1986, p. 131, n. 2. He was a cruel ruler.

[808] He was an official of the state of Song during the Spring and Autumn period, see the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 at "Xuangong ernian" 宣公二年 section; *Zuozhuan*, 1987, p. 394. During the war with the state of Zheng 鄭 he was captured. He escaped and became the official who superintend the construction of the city walls.

[809] They made this song to mock him. The song says that even if now he is supervising the work of others with big eyes, before he just escaped in shame, "Bulging are his eyes, raised up his belly, he got rid of his armour and came back, with beard and moustache, he got rid of his armour and came back" 睅其目，皤其腹，棄甲而復，于思于思，棄甲復來, Z*uozhuan*, 1987, p. 396; Zhou Zhenfu, 1986, p. 131, n. 5.

[810] He was a high official of the state of Lu during the Spring and Autumn period. The *Zuozhuan* 左傳, 4th year of duke Xiang 襄 records that he brought the Lu's army to rescue the state of Ceng 鄫 but was defeated by the state of Zhu邾, *Zuozhuan*, 1987, p. 502.

[811] The people of Lu mocked him singing: "dwarf, oh dwarf, you made us be defeated by the state of Zhu" 侏儒侏儒，使我敗於邾！He was not tall, but they were mocking also his poor ability; *Zuozhuan*, 1987, pp. 501-502.

worm and crab),[812]or the lewd song "Lishou" 貍首 (Cat's head) are concerned,[813] they have an educative function, so that they are recorded in the *Liji*. Therefore we know that *xie* and *yin* can not be neglected.

Xie 諧, or "humorous," means *jie* 皆 or "all."[814] It is something expressed in an easy language that suits to common people, and it is enjoyed by all.

In ancient times King Wei of Qi 齊威王 (378–320 BC) indulged in drinking and pleasure, and Chunyu [Kun] 淳于髡 admonished him by the story about good wine.[815] King Xiang of Chu 楚襄王 (r. 298 BC–263 BC) gave a banquet and Song Yu 宋玉 (3rd century BC) wrote a *fu* about the fondness of women.[816] Their purpose was to subtly admonish and [so] they deserve attention.

Furthermore, we have jester Zhan 優旃's admonishment against [Ershi 二世's proposal to] paint the city walls,[817]and jester Meng 優孟's remonstrance against the

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[812] This is recorded in the *Liji* 禮記' s "Tangong" 檀弓 section: in the state of Lu, a man lost his brother but was not wearing the mourning dress. Only when he heard that a disciples of Confucius was going to become the city's official, he forced himself to wear the mourning dress. The people of the city composed a song to mock him: "The silkworm produces silk but the crab has the shell" 蠶則績而蟹有匡. *Ji* 績 means *jima* 缉麻 "to seize the hemp" but here means "to make silk." *Kuang* 匡 is *kuang* 筐 "basket" and here it signifies "the crab's shell." The phrase means that to raise silkworm it is necessary a basket; the crab's shell seems a basket, but in origin it has nothing to do with silkworm. The hidden meaning is: even if he is dressing mourning clothes, he does not do it for his brother. The passage of the *Liji* says as follows: "There was a man of Cheng whom elder brother had died, but he did not go into mourning. Hearing that Zi-gao was about to become governor of the city, he immediatly did so. The people of Cheng said, 'The silkworm produces the silk, but the crab has the shell; the bee has its cap, but the cicada has the strings. His elder brother died, but it was Zi-gao who made the mourning for him." 成人有其兄死而不為衰者，聞子皋將為成宰，遂為衰。成人曰："蠶則績而蟹有匡，范則冠而蟬有緌，兄則死而子皋為之衰。" *LJ* 10. 327-328.

[813] The *Liji* 禮記's "Tangong" 檀弓 section records that when the mother of Yuan Rang 原壤, a friend of Confucius, died, Confucius went to help him to arrange the funeral matter. Yuan Rang touching the coffin sang: "It is marked like a wild cat's head; It is [smooth] as a young lady's hand which you hold. "貍首之斑然，執女手之卷然." It means that the decorative patterns of the coffin were similar to the bright colours of the wildcat's face. *LJ* 10. 322-323.

[814] The *Shuowen jiezi* says: "[Xie] it means *he* 'to harmonize;' it is composed by the character *yan* 'the word' and *jie* 'all' 詥也。从言皆聲, *SWJZ*, p. 93. Vincent Shi says that Liu Xie was apparently treating the phonetic *jie* 皆 as a significant element, so in this case we have to translate the term *jie* (all) to mean "some kind of harmony among all people;" Shi 1983, p. 157, n. 5.

[815] *SJ* 126. 3199

[816] The *fu* is "Dengtuzi haose fu" 登徒子好色賦 (Master Dengtu is fond of captivating beauty) it is recorded in the Xiao Tong 蕭統's *Wenxuan* 文選, at the *juan* 19, *WX* 19. 892-895. In this composition is narrated that Master Dengtu accused Song Yu of "fondness for captivating beauty" (*haose*), and urged him to leave Song out of the palace. Song Yu with a clever and ironic defence says that is Dengtu the one to be *haose*, he has an ugly wife, but she gave him five children, this shows that Dengtu could not refrain himself, even if she was not appealing. For the translation of the term *haose* in "captivating beauty" see Nienhauser, 1998b, p. 300.

[817] *SJ* 126. 3203

funeral service for a horse;[818] in both cases they used tricky words and embellished speeches to restrain [their] confused and tyrannical lords. Therefore Zichang 子長,[819] compiling his history (the *Shiji*), included the biographies of [these] ironical critics, because in spite of their tortuous speeches, they always aimed toward the right principle. However, what is by nature not refined, in the end easily reveals imperfections.[820]

Then, Dongfang [Shuo] 東方朔 and Mei Gao 枚皋 "fed on the dregs of the wine."[821] They did nothing to correct [the government]; instead they slandered and indulged in frivolous and improper acts. This is why [Mei Gao] considered his *fu* as mere jester-like entertainment, and he regretted being looked upon as a jester."

Thus Wei Wen 魏文 (Cao Pi 曹丕) (187–226 AD) used comic themes to write jokes,[822] and Xue Zong 薛綜 jested sarcastically during a diplomatic reception.[823] These jokes, though effective in producing merriment during a feast, did not bring any benefits to their time, although good writers often went out of their way to write this type of works;[824] Pan Yue 潘岳's composition on an ugly woman belongs to this type of texts, and Shu Xi 束晳's piece on a pastry peddler is one of this kind - they knew they were wrong but still they wrote them; [825] [like these two] there were no less than one hundred authors. The humorists during the Wei and the Jin accentuated the trend by their mutual influence. The nose of Ying Yang 應瑒 (? –217 AD) was compared to an egg whose half part has been stolen, and the head of

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[818] *SJ* 126. 3200

[819] Zichang is the courtesy name (*zi*字) of Sima Qian司馬遷.

[820] Echo of the *Lunyu* (19/4. 200): "Although the byways no doubt have their own interesting sights to see, one who wishes to reach a distant destination fears becoming mired. This is why the gentleman does not take the byways" 雖小道，必有可觀者焉，致遠恐泥，是以君子弗為也; trans. Slingerland, 2003, p. 222.

[821]This means they had a tendency to sink to the level of the common herd (or drift with the current). A expression taken from the "Yufu" 漁夫 in the *Chuci* 楚辭, meaning to follow the trend of the crowed.

[822] This passage can also be translated: "Collected together humorous talks and compiled a "xiaoshu" 笑書 (a comic book)". Still, his book of jokes is not reported in his biography in the "Weizhi" 魏志, in the *Sanguozhi* 三國志. All the Ming editions of the *WXDL* has the character *da*大 instead of *wen*文; *da* 大 actually can be a mistake for *ren* 人, in this case it could be that the phrase refers to someone of Wei that wrote a humoristic book (Handan Chun 邯鄲淳), so that "xiaoshu" 笑書 actually stands for the *Xiaolin* 笑林. See. *WXDL* 3/15. 200.

[823] See the biography in the "Wuzhi" 吳志, in the *Sanguozhi*, *SGZ* 53. 1250.

[824] Literally: they could not refrain themselves from go out of the right way. From "thus Wei-wen" to "works," trans. Shi, 1983, p. 157.

[825] Pan Yue's "Choufu fu" 醜婦賦 is lost; Shu Xi's "Bing fu" 餅賦 can be found in the *QJW* 87. 1962-1963.

Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300 AD) was compared to a pestle.[826] These ugly words are harmful to the words that conform to moral principles. Are they not as unseemly as laughter from a drowning man[827] or reckless song from a criminal?[828]

[3/15. 195] *Yin* 讔 "enigma," means *yin* 隱 "to hide:" to use obscure language to hide a meaning or to employ clever analogies (*pijue* 譬譎) to point to something. In ancient times, when Huan [Wu]she 還無社 asked a Chu general to help him,[829] the "yeast" was used to refer to the dry well.[830] When [Shen] Shuyi 申叔儀 (fl. 428 BC) begged for food from the minister of Lu 魯, he sang of a pendant jade and called for *gengkui* 庚癸.[831] Wu Ju 伍舉remonstrated to the King [Zhuang] of Chu 楚莊王 (?–591 BC)[832] with [the riddle] of the great bird,[833] and a Qi 齊gentleman mocked the Lord of Xue 薛公 with [the riddle] of the sea fish.[834] Zhuang Ji [of Chu] 楚莊姬 used

[826] The reference to the case of Ying Yang cannot be identified, but the meaning is that the composition mocked his big nose. As far as Zhang Hua is concerned, it means that the form of his head was up thin and the lower part large, like a pestle. Vincent Shi (1983, p. 159, n. 15) says that the reference on Zhang Hua is found in the *Shishuo xinyu* 25/7, in which "six persons are mentioned together with six descriptions. Since the correlation between the persons mentioned and the subsequent descriptions is not specified, Liu Xie must have some other source as the basis of his statement." However Mather translates the *Shishuo*'s passage as: "[…] One (Zhang Hua) lacking manners, is overstocked with airs, another (Liu Xiu) foulmouthed, is short on wit. The mouth of one (Zou Zhan) seems stuffed with syrup, the head of another (Zheng Xu) looks like a kerchiefed drug pestle," trans. Mather, 2002, p. 435. Here the pestle-like head is associated with Zheng Xu 鄭詡; see also *SSXY* 25/7. 782-784.

[827] The *Zuozhuan*, at 20th year of duke Ai 哀, records that the King of Wu 吳王, when he didn't know what to do he said: "The drowning man must laughs" 溺人必笑, *Zuozhuan*, 1987, p. 893.

[828] In the *Lüshi chunqiu* 吕氏春秋, "Dayue" 大樂 chapter we find: "a man who is drowing, it is not that he does not laugh, a man who is in prison, it is not that he does not sing" 溺者非不笑也，罪人非不歌也, *LSCQ* 5/2. 125.

[829] It happened when Xiao was under attack by Chu, and Huan knew that the Xiao army would be routed.

[830] Huan Wushe was a man of Xiao 蕭. The dry well in which Huan hid himself while waiting to be rescued. See *Zuozhuan*, 12th year of duke Xuan 宣, *Zuozhuan*, 1987, p. 424. At that time Chu 楚 was strong and Xiao 蕭 was weak, because people of Xiao had killed two officials of Chu, Chu dispatched troops to attack Xiao. But Huan Wushe didn't know this situation. He was talking with the Chu's high official Sima Mao, when his friend Shen Shuzhan 申叔展 came by (he was from Chu too); Shen wanted to protect his friend so came up with the riddle of the yeast to make him hide himself in the well.

[831] Shen Shuyi was a man of Wu 吳. It appears in *Zuozhuan* 左傳, 13th year of duke Ai 哀; *Zuozhuan*, 1987, p. 873. Geng kui means good and water

[832] Also wrote as King Zhuang of Jing 荊莊王.

[833] This story is recorded in the *Shiji* at the "Chu shijia" 楚世家 chapter; *SJ* 40. 1700. The riddle is the same recorded in the *Shiji*'s "Guji liezhuan" 滑稽列傳, where it is told by Chunyu Kun, who addressed it to King Wei of Qi 齊威王; see *SJ* 126. 3217.

[834] This story is told in the *Zhanguo ce*, at the "Qi ci yi" 齊刺一 section: "Have you not heard of the big fish? No net can get it, and no hook can catch it. However, if ever it is out of water, even ants can do anything they wish with it. Now the state of Qi is your water. Having Qi, why Should you build

the allegory of the tail of the dragon,[835] and Zang Wen[zhong] 臧文仲 sent a confused message using the image of a sheep-skin.[836] Cases of employment of *yin* speeches are preserved in the historical records. The important ones served to promote good government and helped develop personality, and some of the minor ones could also correct errors and dissolve doubts. Generally, their use is in expediency, and they are employed at a critical moment. Together with the humorous writings they may be considered to be two aspects of the same thing. During the Han dynasty there was a *Yinshu* (Text of riddles) in 18 *pian*,[837] and Liu Xin and Ban Gu placed it at the end of "Songs" section.[838]

In ancient times, King Zhuang of Chu 楚莊王 and King Wei of Qi 齊威王 (378–320 BC) loved enigmas.[839] Thereafter came Dongfang Manjian (Dongfang Shuo), who was particularly clever in making them, but [his are made by] absurd statements and ridiculous jests**,** which have no use in admonishing or helping to solve a problem.[840]

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walls for Xue? If ever you should lose Qi, even if you heightened the walls of Xue to the shy, it would be of no use to you" 君不聞大魚乎？網不能止，鉤不能牽，蕩而失水，則螻蟻得意焉。今夫齊， 亦君之水也。君長有齊陰，奚以薛為？夫齊，雖隆薛之城到於天，猶之無益也; *ZGC* 8. 209, trans. Shi 1983, p. 161, n. 20]. The *Hanfeizi*'s version, which is found at the "Shuilin xia" 說林下 chapter (*HFZ* 6. 799-800), is translated by Knechtges, 1970-71, pp. 85-86.

[835] From the *Lienüzhuan*列女傳, "Biantong" 辯通section (6. 61-62). The story says as follows: "The fish out of water is Your Majesty, who is now five hundred *li* from the capital. The dragon without a tail points out the fact that you are now forty years age and yet without a heir, the walls about to fall in at which Your Majesty will not take a look mean that confusion is about to reign and yet you will not change your way." "大魚失水，有龍無尾。牆欲內崩，而王不視。"王曰：“不知也。”姪對曰：“大魚失水者，王離國五百里也 ，樂之於前 ，不思禍之起於後也。有龍無尾者，年既四十，無太子也。國無強輔，必且殆也。牆欲內崩而王不視者，禍亂且成而王不改也。" trans. Shi, 1983, p. 161, n. 21.

[836] Zang Wenzhu was sent by the Duke of Lu to Qi as an envoy. But Qi captured him. Zang Wenzhu then wrote a letter to his Duke in which he was talking about a "sheep skin." The Duke rightly understood that Qi was ready to attack Lu. The story is recorded in the *Lienüzhuan*, "Renzhi" 仁智 section, (3. 26-27).

[837] Vincent Shi (1983, p. 159) translates: "There were eighteen collections of enigmas," it could also mean in fact a plurality of textual material. Knechtges (1976, p. 19) translates this *Hanshu*'s reference as "eighteen *yinshu* or 'riddles'."

[838] This enigmas, actually, are placed at the end of the section dedicated to miscellaneous *fu* poetry (*za fu* 雜賦), *HS* 30. 1753.

[839] Their stories are recorded in the *Shiji's* "Guji liezhuan," *SJ* 126. 3197.

[840] The riddles made by Dongfang Shuo were not created to give the sovereign good advices for the government.

Since the time of Wei, jester like-texts and figures were quite rare.[841] Instead men of culture played jokes with enigmas (*yin)* and transformed them into riddles (*miyu*). A riddle is [a composition] whose words are so tortuous and circuitous that they lead [people] into a maze. Some riddles are based on the structure of characters, and some on the picturing and forms of things. With delicate artistic style they show creativity, and with simplicity and clarity they parade their ability with words; their meanings are indirect and yet correct, and their language is ambiguous and yet blunt. Xunqing 荀卿's "Can fu" 蠶賦 (Silkworm) already marked the beginning of this genre. [842] [The riddles by] Wei Wen 魏文 (Cao Pi) and Chen Si 陳思 (Cao Zhi) are terse and close-knit; [those by] Gaogui *xianggong* 高貴鄉公 (Cao Mao)[843] are comprehensive in listing the objects but, while showing some cleverness, they miss the important point. Re-examining the enigmas of the ancients, their logic suits every important matter. When did they indulge in childish jokes, aiming at thigh-slapping merriment?

However, the place of the *xie* and *yin* in literature is comparable to the place which occupies the "petty sayings" (*xiaoshuo*) compared to the Nine Schools.[844] [The *xiaoshuo*] were collected by the petty officials (*baiguan*) to broaden one's knowledge.[845] If one unceasingly studies them, it would be possible to gain mastery

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[841] Vincent Shi translates: "Jokes and jesters have been disparaged;" Shi 1983, p. 163. However, According to Huang Shulin, the *chao* 嘲 character is absent in several editions, and here *yin* character is placed to better explain the definition of "riddle;" here the phrase does not mean "to ridicule enigma" (verb plus object). The phrase "since the time of Wei, jester like-texts and figures were quite rare" means that these humorous texts were replaced by riddle-like texts. See *WXDL* 3/15. 203.

[842]Xun Qing 荀卿 (313 BC–238 BC), Xunzi, the famous philosopher of Warring States period. The "Canfu" 蠶賦 is one of the *fu* collected in the "Fu pian" 賦篇 of the *Xunzi;* This chapter records five riddle-like *fu*: "Li fu" 禮賦, "Zhi fu" 知賦, "Yun fu" 雲賦, "Can fu" 蠶賦, and "Zhen fu" 蔵賦; see *XZ* 18/26. 472-484

[843] He is Cao Mao 曹髦, the nephew of Cao Pi. The riddles written by the three members of the Cao family are all lost.

[844] Actually the School are ten, and the "Yiwenzhi" says that only nine are worthy of attention, excluding the School of the *xiaoshuo* (諸子十家,其可觀者九家而已), *HS* 30. 1746.

[845] "The *xiaoshuo* branch probably originated in the *baiguan* or petty officials. They are the work of those who prattle and talk in the streets and byways, people who 'tell in the lane what they have heard on the road'" 小說家者流，蓋出於稗官。街談巷語，道聽塗說者之所造也; *HS* 30. 1745, trans. Holzman 2003, p. 77.

[of the skill] of [Chunyu] Kun and others,[846]and became a close friend of the jesters Meng and Zhan![847]

The eulogy says: "The jokes and enigmas of ancient times served to get out of critical situations and to relieve from boredom." Although silk and hemp exist, the weeds should not be cast aside." [848] [*Xie* and *yin*] together could aim for the right principle and suit the opportune moment, and they are very useful to admonish and give advice. Empty jokes and humorous wits are very harmful to the words conform to moral principles.

[846]According to several scholar *Tan* 袒 is an error for Shuo 朔 (see Zhou Zhenfu, 1986, p. 136, Shi, 1983, p. 163) However Liu Xie praises Chunyu Kun and slanders Dongfang Shuo; maybe the author is talking about the last four persons he mentioned.
[847] Vincent Shi (1983, p. 163) translates as: "Would he be more advanced than [Chunyu] Kun and [Dongfang] Shuo and the firm friends of Zhan and Meng the jesters?"
[848] *Zuozhuan* 11. 448 (9th year of Duke Cheng 成).

史記卷一百二十六

滑稽列傳第六十六

索隱 按：滑，亂也；稽，同也。言辨捷之人言非若是，說是若非，言能亂異同也。

孔子曰：「六藝於治一也。〔一〕禮以節人，樂以發和，書以道事，詩以達意，易以神化，春秋以義。」太史公曰：天道恢恢，豈不大哉！談言微中，亦可以解紛。

〔一〕正義 言六藝之文雖異，禮節樂和，導民立政，天下平定，其歸一揆。至於談言微中，亦以解其紛亂，故治一也。

淳于髡〔一〕者，齊之贅壻〔二〕也。長不滿七尺，滑稽多辯，數使諸侯，未嘗屈辱。齊威王之時喜隱，〔三〕好爲淫樂長夜之飲，沈湎不治，委政卿大夫。百官荒亂，諸侯並侵，國且危亡，在於旦暮，左右莫敢諫。淳于髡說之以隱曰：「國中有大鳥，止王之庭，三年不蜚又不鳴，王知此鳥何也？」王曰：「此鳥不飛則已，一飛沖天；不鳴則已，一鳴驚人。」於是乃朝諸縣令長七十二人，賞一人，誅一人，奮兵而出。諸侯振驚，皆還齊侵地。威行三十六年。

語在田完世家中。

〔一〕索隱　苦瑰反。

〔二〕索隱　女之夫也，比於子，如人犹贅，是餘剩之物也。

〔三〕索隱　上許既反。喜，好也。喜隱謂好隱語。

威王八年，楚大發兵加齊。齊王使淳于髡之趙請救兵，齎金百斤，車馬十駟。淳于髡仰天大笑，冠纓索絕。〔一〕王曰：「先生少之乎？」髡曰：「何敢！」王曰：「笑豈有說乎？」髡曰：「今者臣從東方來，見道傍有禳田者，〔二〕操一豚蹄，酒一盂，祝曰：『甌窶滿篝，〔三〕汙邪滿車，〔四〕五穀蕃熟，穰穰滿家。』臣見其所持者狹而所欲者奢，故笑之。」於是齊威王乃益齎黃金千溢，白璧十雙，車馬百駟。髡辭而行，至趙。趙王與之精兵十萬，革車千乘。楚聞之，夜引兵而去。

〔一〕索隱　案：索訓盡，言冠纓盡絕也。孔衍春秋後語亦作「冠纓盡絕」也。

〔二〕索隱　案：謂爲田求福穰。

〔三〕集解　徐廣曰：「篝，籠也。」索隱　案：甌窶猶杯樓也。窶音如婁，古字少耳。言豐年收掇易，可滿篝籠耳。正義　窶音樓。篝音溝，籠也。甌樓謂高地狹小之區，得滿篝籠也。

〔四〕集解　司馬彪曰：「汙邪，下地田也。」索隱　按：司馬彪云「汙邪，下地田」。即下田之中有薪，可滿車。正義　汙音烏。

威王大說，置酒後宮，召髡賜之酒。問曰：「先生能飲幾何而醉？」對曰：「臣飲一斗亦醉，一石亦醉。」威王曰：「先生飲一斗而醉，惡能飲一石哉！其說可得聞乎？」髡曰：「賜酒大王之前，執法在傍，御史在後，髡恐懼俯伏而飲，不過一斗徑醉矣。若親有嚴客，髡帣韝鞠膝，〔一〕侍酒於前，時賜餘瀝，奉觴上壽，數起，飲不過二斗徑醉矣。若朋友交遊，久不相見，卒然相覩，歡然道故，私情相語，飲可五六斗徑醉矣。若乃州閭之會，男女雜坐，行酒稽留，六博投壺，相引爲曹，握手無罰，目眙不禁，〔二〕前有墮珥，後有遺簪，髡竊樂此，飲可八斗而醉二參。〔三〕日暮酒闌，合尊促坐，男女同席，履舃交錯，杯盤狼藉，堂上燭滅，主人留髡而送客，〔四〕羅襦襟解，微聞薌澤，當此之時，髡心最歡，能飲一石。故曰酒極則亂，樂極則悲；萬事盡然，言不可極，極之而衰。」以諷諫焉。齊王曰：「善。」乃罷長夜之飲，以髡爲諸侯主客。〔五〕宗室置酒，髡嘗在側。

〔一〕集解徐廣曰：「帣，收衣袂也。袂，袂也。韝，臂捍也，音溝。鞠，曲也。膝音其紀反，又與『跽』同，謂小跪也。」索隱帣音卷，紀免反，謂收袖也。韝音溝，臂扞也。鞠，曲躬也。膝音其紀反，與「跽」同音，謂小跪。

〔二〕集解徐廣曰：「眙，吐氐反，直視貌。」索隱眙音與「瞪」同，謂直視也，丑氐反，又音丑二反。

〔三〕索隱案：上云「五六斗徑醉矣」，則此爲樂亦甚，飲可八斗而未徑醉，故云「竊樂」。二參，言十有二參醉也。

〔四〕集解徐廣曰：「一本云『留髡坐，起送客』。」

〔三〕正義今鴻臚卿也。

其後百餘年，楚有優孟。

優孟，〔一〕故楚之樂人也。長八尺，多辯，常以談笑諷諫。楚莊王之時，有所愛馬，衣以文繡，置之華屋之下，席以露牀，啗以棗脯。馬病肥死，使羣臣喪之，欲以棺槨大夫禮葬之。左右爭之，以爲不可。王下令曰：「有敢以馬諫者，罪至死。」優孟聞之，入殿門，仰天大哭。王驚而問其故。優孟曰：「馬者王之所愛也，以楚國堂堂之大，何求不得，而以大夫禮葬之，薄，請以人君禮葬之。」王曰：「何如？」對曰：「臣請以彫玉爲棺，文梓爲槨，楩楓豫章爲題湊，〔二〕發甲卒爲穿壙，老弱負土，齊趙陪位於前，韓魏翼衛其後，〔三〕廟食太牢，奉以萬戶之邑。諸侯聞之，皆知大王賤人而貴馬也。」王曰：「寡人之過一至此乎！爲之柰何？」優孟曰：「請爲大王六畜葬之。以壟竈爲槨，〔四〕銅歷爲棺，〔五〕齊以薑棗，〔六〕薦以木蘭，祭以糧稻，衣以火光，葬之於人腹腸。」〔七〕於是王乃使以馬屬太官，無令天下久聞也。

〔一〕索隱案：優者，倡優也。孟，字也。其優旃亦同，旃其字耳。優孟在楚，旃在秦者也。

〔二〕集解蘇林曰：「以木累棺外，木頭皆內向，故曰題湊。」　正義楩，頻緣反。

〔三〕集解 楚莊王時，未有趙、韓、魏三國。 索隱 案：此辨說者之詞，後人所增飾之矣。

〔四〕索隱 按：皇甫亦說此事，以「瓶罌」爲「罄突」也。

〔五〕索隱 按：歷即釜鬲也。

〔六〕索隱 按：古者食肉用薤渠，禮內則云「實棗於其腹中，屑桂與薑，以酒漬其上而食之」是也。

〔七〕索隱 皇甫云：「火送之箸端，葬之腸中。」

楚相孫叔敖知其賢人也，善待之。病且死，屬其子曰：「我死，汝必貧困。若往見優孟，言我孫叔敖之子也。」居數年，其子窮困負薪，逢優孟，與言曰：「我，孫叔敖子也。父且死時，屬我貧困往見優孟。」優孟曰：「若無遠有所之。」〔一〕即爲孫叔敖衣冠，抵掌談語。〔二〕歲餘，像孫叔敖，楚王及左右不能別也。莊王置酒，優孟前爲壽。莊王大驚，以爲孫叔敖復生也，欲以爲相。優孟曰：「請歸與婦計之，三日而爲相。」莊王許之。三日後，優孟復來。王曰：「婦言謂何？」孟曰：「婦言愼無爲，楚相不足爲也。如孫叔敖之爲楚相，盡忠爲廉以治楚，楚王得以霸。今死，其子無立錐之地，貧困負薪以自飲食。必如孫叔敖，不如自殺。」因歌曰：「山居耕田苦，難以得食。起而爲吏，身貪鄙者餘財，不顧恥辱。身死家室富，又恐受賕枉法，爲姦觸大罪，身死而家滅。貪吏安可爲也！念爲廉吏，奉法守職，竟死不敢爲非。廉吏安可爲也！楚相孫叔敖持廉至死，方今妻子窮困負薪而食，不足爲也！」於是莊

王謝優孟，乃召孫叔敖子，封之寢丘〔三〕四百戶，以奉其祀。後十世不絕。此知可以言時矣。

〔一〕索隱　案：謂優孟語孫叔敖之子曰「汝無還有所之，適他境，恐王後求汝不得」者也。

〔二〕集解　戰國策曰：「蘇秦說趙王華屋之下，抵掌而言。」張載曰：「談說之容則也。」

〔三〕集解　徐廣曰：「在固始。」正義　今光州固始縣，本寢丘邑也。呂氏春秋云：「楚孫叔敖有功於國，疾將死，戒其子曰：『王數欲封我，我辭不受。我死，必封汝。汝無受利地，荊楚閒有寢丘者，其爲地不利，而前有妒谷，後有吳丘，其名惡，可長有也。』其子從之。楚功臣封二世而收，唯寢丘不奪也。」

其後二百餘年，秦有優旃。

優旃者，秦倡侏儒也。善爲笑言，然合於大道。秦始皇時，置酒而天雨，陛楯者皆沾寒。優旃見而哀之，謂之曰：「汝欲休乎？」陛楯者皆曰：「幸甚。」優旃曰：「我即呼汝，汝疾應曰諾。」居有頃，殿上上壽呼萬歲。優旃臨檻〔一〕大呼曰：「陛楯郎！」郎曰：「諾。」優旃曰：「汝雖長，何益，幸雨立。我雖短也，幸休居。」於是始皇使陛楯者得半相代。

〔一〕正義　御覽反。

始皇嘗議欲大苑囿，東至函谷關，西至雍、陳倉。〔一〕優旃曰：「善。多縱禽獸於其中，寇

從東方來，令麋鹿觸之足矣。」始皇以故輟止。

〔一〕正義 今岐州雍縣及陳倉縣也。

二世立，又欲漆其城。優旃曰：「善。主上雖無言，臣固將請之。漆城雖於百姓愁費，然佳哉！漆城蕩蕩，寇來不能上。卽欲就之，易爲漆耳，顧難爲蔭室。」於是二世笑之，以其故止。居無何，二世殺死，優旃歸漢，數年而卒。

太史公曰：淳于髡仰天大笑，齊威王橫行。優孟搖頭而歌，負薪者以封。優旃臨檻疾呼，陛楯得以半更。豈不亦偉哉！

褚先生曰：臣幸得以經術爲郎，而好讀外家傳語。〔一〕竊不遜讓，復作故事滑稽〔二〕之語六章，編之於左。可以覽觀揚意，以示後世好事者讀之，以游心駭耳，以附益上方太史公之三章。

〔一〕索隱 按：東方朔亦多博觀外家之語，則外家非正經，卽史傳襍說之書也。

〔二〕索隱 楚詞云：「將突梯滑稽，如脂如韋。」崔浩云：「滑音骨。滑稽，流酒器也。轉注吐酒，終日不已。言出口成章，詞不窮竭，若滑稽之吐酒。故楊雄酒賦云：『鴟夷滑稽，腹大如壺，盡日盛酒，人復藉沽』是也。」又姚察云：「滑

稽猶俳諧也。滑讀如字，稽音計也。言諧語滑利，其知計疾出，故云滑稽。」

武帝時有所幸倡郭舍人者，發言陳辭雖不合大道，然令人主和說。武帝少時，東武侯母〔一〕常養帝，〔二〕帝壯時，號之曰「大乳母」。率一月再朝。朝奏入，有詔使幸臣馬游卿以帛五十匹賜乳母，又奉飲糒飧養乳母。乳母上書曰：「某所有公田，願得假倩之。」帝曰：「乳母欲得之乎？」以賜乳母。乳母所言，未嘗不聽。有詔得令乳母乘車行馳道中。當此之時，公卿大臣皆敬重乳母。乳母家子孫奴從者橫暴長安中，當道擊頓人車馬，奪人衣服。聞於中，不忍致之法。有司請徙乳母家室，處之於邊。奏可。乳母當入至前，面見辭。乳母先見郭舍人，爲下泣。舍人曰：「即入見辭去，疾步數還顧。」乳母如其言，謝去，疾步數還顧。郭舍人疾言罵之曰：「咄！老女子！何不疾行！陛下已壯矣，寧尚須汝乳而活邪？尚何還顧！」於是人主憐焉悲之，乃下詔止無徙乳母，罰謫譖之者。〔三〕

〔一〕索隱　案：東武，縣名；侯，乳母姓。

〔二〕正義　高祖功臣表云東武侯郭家，高祖六年封。子他，孝景六年弃市，國除。蓋他母常養武帝。

〔三〕索隱　罰適譖之者。謂武帝罰謫譖乳母之人也。

武帝時，齊人有東方生名朔，〔一〕以好古傳書，愛經術，多所博觀外家之語。朔初入長安，至公車上書，〔二〕凡用三千奏牘。公車令兩人共持舉其書，僅然能勝之。人主從上方讀之，止，輒乙其處，讀之二月乃盡。詔拜以爲郎，常在側侍中。數召至前談語，人主未嘗不說也。時詔賜之食於前。飯已，盡懷其餘肉持去，衣盡汙。數賜縑帛，襜揭而去。徒用所賜錢帛，取少婦於長安中好女。率取婦一歲所者卽弃去，更取婦。所賜錢財盡索之於女子。人主左右諸郎半呼之「狂人」。人主聞之，曰：「令朔在事無爲是行者，若等安能及之哉！」朔任其子爲郎，又爲侍謁者，常持節出使。朔行殿中，郎謂之曰：「人皆以先生爲狂。」朔曰：「如朔等，所謂避世於朝廷閒者也。古之人，乃避世於深山中。」時坐席中，酒酣，據地歌曰：「陸沈於俗，〔三〕避世金馬門。宮殿中可以避世全身，何必深山之中，蒿廬之下。」金馬門者，宦〔者〕署門也，門傍有銅馬，故謂之曰「金馬門」。

〔一〕索隱案：仲長統云遷爲滑稽傳，序優旃事，不稱東方朔，非也。朔之行事，豈直旃、孟之比哉。而桓譚亦以遷爲是，又非也。　正義漢書云：「平原厭次人也。」輿地志云：「厭次，宜是富平縣之鄉聚名也。」括地〔志〕云：「富平故城在倉州陽信縣東南四十里，漢縣也。」

鈔本、崇文本並作「祗」，不誤。詩小雅何人斯：「祗攪我心。」

諧隱第十五

芮良夫之詩云：自有肺腸，俾民卒狂。夫心險如山，口壅若川，怨怒之情不一，歡謔之言無方。昔華元棄甲，城者發睨目之譏，臧紇喪師，國人造侏儒之歌：並嗤戲形貌，內怨爲俳也。又蠶蠶鄙諺，貍首淫哇，苟可箴戒，載于禮典。故知諧辭讔言，亦無棄矣。

諧之言皆也。辭淺會俗，皆悅笑也。昔齊威元作宣，許改。酣樂，而淳于說甘酒；楚襄讌集，而宋玉賦好色：意在微諷，有足觀者。及優旃之諷漆城，優孟之諫葬馬，並譎辭飾說，抑止昏暴。是以子長編史，列傳滑稽，以其辭雖傾回，意歸義正也。但本體不雅，一作雜其流易弊。於是東方枚皐，餔糟啜醨，無所匡正，而詆嫚媟元作媟，謝改。弄，故其自稱爲賦，迺亦俳也；見視如倡，亦有悔矣。至魏文元作大因俳說以著笑元作茂，孫改。書，薛綜憑宴會而發嘲調，雖抃推疑誤席，而無益時用矣。然而懿文之士，未免枉轡；潘岳醜婦之屬，束皙賣餅之類，尤而一作相效之，蓋以百數。魏晉滑稽，盛相驅扇，遂乃應場之鼻，方於盜削卵；張華之形，比乎握春杵。曾是莠言，有虧德音，豈非溺者之妄笑，元作茂，朱改。胥靡之狂歌歟？

謎者，隱也；遯辭以隱意，譎譬以指事也。昔還社元作楊求拯元作極于楚師，喻智井而稱麥麴；叔儀乞糧于魯人，歌佩玉而呼庚癸；伍舉刺荊王以大鳥，齊客譏薛公以海魚；莊姬託辭于龍尾，臧文謬書于羊裘：隱語之用，被于紀傳。大者興治濟身，其次弼違曉惑。蓋意生于權譎，而事出于機急，與夫諧辭，可相表裏者也。漢世隱書，十有八篇，歆固編文，録之歌末。昔楚莊齊威，性好隱語。至東方曼倩，尤巧辭述。但謬辭詆戲，無益規補。自魏代以來，頗非俳優，而君子嘲一本無嘲字隱，化爲謎語。謎也者，迴互其辭，使昏迷也。或體目文字，或圖象品物，纖巧以弄思，元作忠，謝改。淺察以衒辭，義欲婉而正，辭欲隱而顯。荀卿蠶賦，已兆其體。至魏文陳思，約而密之；高貴鄉公，博舉品物，雖有小巧，用乖遠大。夫觀古之爲隱，理周要務，豈爲童穉之戲謔，搏髀而抃笑哉！然文辭之有諧讔，譬九流之有小説，蓋稗官所采，以廣視聽。若效而不已，則髡袒而入室，旃孟之石交乎！

贊曰：古之嘲隱，振危釋憊。雖有絲麻，無棄菅蒯。會義適時，頗益諷誡。空戲滑稽，德音大壞。

【黄叔琳注】

芮良夫〔詩桑柔傳〕芮伯刺厲王之詩。〔左傳〕周芮良夫之詩。　心險〔莊子〕孔子曰：凡人心險於山川。　口

壅〔國語〕召公曰：防民之口，甚於防川。川壅而潰，傷人必多，民亦如之。　**華元**〔左傳〕宋華元獲於鄭，宋以兵車文馬贖之。宋城，華元爲植。城者謳曰：睢其目，皤其腹，棄甲而復。于思于思，棄甲復來。　**臧紇**〔左傳〕臧紇救鄫，侵邾，敗於狐駘。國人誦之曰：臧之狐裘，敗我於狐駘；我君小子，朱儒是使，朱儒朱儒，使我敗於邾。

蠶蟬〔檀弓〕成人有其兄死而不爲哀者，聞子皐將爲成宰，遂爲哀。成人曰：蠶則績而蟬有匡，范則冠而蟬有緌，兄則死而子皐爲之哀。　**貍首**〔檀弓〕原壤之母死，孔子助之沐槨。原壤登木歌曰：貍首之斑然，執女手之卷然。

說甘酒〔滑稽列傳〕齊威王好爲長夜之飲，置酒後宮，召淳于髡賜之酒。問曰：先生能飲幾何而醉？對曰：臣飲一斗亦醉，一石亦醉。故曰：酒極則亂，樂極則悲，萬事盡然，言不可極，極之而衰。以諷諫焉。王曰：善。乃罷長夜之飲。　**賦好色**〔文選〕大夫登徒子侍于楚襄王，短宋玉。玉著登徒子好色賦，王稱善。　**諷漆城**〔滑稽列傳〕秦二世欲漆其城，優旃曰：善！漆城蕩蕩，寇來不能上；即欲就之，易爲漆耳。顧難爲蔭室。於是二世笑之，以其故止。　**諫葬馬**〔滑稽列傳〕楚莊王有所愛馬死，欲以棺槨大夫禮葬之。優孟曰：以楚國堂堂之大，何求不得，而以大夫禮葬之！薄，請以人君禮葬之。諸侯聞之，皆知大王賤人而貴馬也。於是王乃使以馬屬太官，無令天下久聞也。　**淳稽**〔史記滑稽列傳注〕崔浩云：滑，音骨。稽，流酒器也。轉注吐酒，終日不已，言出口成章，辭不窮竭，若滑稽之吐酒。故揚雄酒賦云「鴟夷滑稽，腹大如壺，盡日盛酒，人復藉沽」是也。又姚察云：滑稽，猶俳諧也。滑，讀如字。稽，音計也。言諧語滑利，其計智疾出，故云滑稽。　**東方枚皐**〔枚皐傳〕自言爲賦不如相如，又言爲賦迺俳，見視如倡，自悔類倡也。故其賦有詆諆東方朔，又自詆諆其文。　**餔糟啜醨**〔楚辭〕衆人皆醉，何不餔其糟而歠其醨。　**薛綜**〔薛綜傳〕綜字敬文，仕吳守謁者僕射。蜀使張奉來聘，綜嘲之曰：有犬爲獨，

無犬爲蜀，橫目勾身，蟲入其腹。**束晳**〔束晳傳〕束皙爲勸農及鼛諸賦，文頗鄙俗，時人薄之。**溺者**〔左傳〕吳王曰：溺人必笑，吾將有間也。**胥靡**〔書傳〕使胥靡刑人築護此道，說賢而隱，代胥靡築之以供食。〔疏〕胥，相也。靡，隨也。古者相隨坐輕刑之名。又〔漢書注〕師古曰：聯繫使相隨而服役之，故謂之胥靡，猶今之役囚徒，以鎖聯綴耳。**曾井麥翹**〔左傳〕楚子圍蔡，還無社與司馬卯言，號申叔展。叔展曰：有麥麴乎？曰：無。有山鞠窮乎？曰：無。河魚腹疾奈何？曰：目於曾井而拯之。**佩玉庚癸**〔左傳〕哀公十三年夏，公會單平公、晉定公、吳夫差于黃池，吳申叔儀乞糧於公孫有山氏曰：佩玉藥兮，余無所繫之！旨酒一盛兮，余與褐之父睨之！對曰：粱則無矣，麤則有之。若登首山以呼曰：庚癸乎，則諾。〔杜注〕庚，西方，主穀。癸，北方，主水。**大鳥**〔楚世家〕莊王卽位三年，不出號令。伍舉曰：願有進隱。曰：有鳥在於阜，三年不蜚不鳴，是何鳥也？莊王曰：三年不蜚，蜚將沖天；三年不鳴，鳴將驚人。舉退矣，吾知之矣。**海魚**〔戰國策〕靖郭君將城薛，曰：無爲客通。齊人有請者曰：臣請三言而已矣。因見之。客趨而進曰：海大魚。君曰：客有於此。客曰：君不聞大魚乎？網不能止，鉤不能牽，蕩而失水，則螻蟻得意焉。今夫齊，亦君之水也，君長齊，奚以薛爲？夫齊雖隆薛之城到於天，猶之無益也。君曰：善！乃輟城薛。**龍尾**〔列女傳〕楚莊姬上隱語於王曰：大魚失水，有龍無尾，牆欲內崩，而王不視。王問之，對曰：魚失水，離國五百里也。龍無尾，年三十無太子也。牆崩不視，禍將成而王不改也。**羊裘**〔列女傳〕臧文仲使於齊，齊拘之。文仲微使人遺公書，謬其辭曰：斂小器，投諸台。食獵犬，組羊裘。琴之合，甚思之。母見書而泣曰：吾子拘而有木治矣。**漢世隱書**〔漢藝文志〕隱書十八篇。師古曰：劉向別錄云：隱書者，疑其言以相問，對者以慮思之，可以無不論。**性好隱語**〔滑稽列傳〕齊威王之時喜隱。索隱曰：喜隱謂

好隱語。**曼倩**（東方朔傳）舍人恚曰：朔擅詆欺天子從官，當棄市。上問朔，何故詆之？對曰：臣非敢詆之，乃與爲隱耳。舍人不服，因曰：臣願復問朔隱語。朔應聲輒對，變詐鋒出，莫能窮者。**謎**（古詩所）鮑照有井字謎。**鹽賦**（賦苑）荀卿鹽賦，通篇皆形似之言，至末語始云，夫是之謂鹽理。**高貴鄉公**（晉陽秋）高貴鄉公神明爽儁，德音宣朗。景王曰：上何如主也？鍾會對曰：才同陳思，武類太祖。景王曰：若如卿言，社稷之福也。**九流**（漢藝文志）有儒家者流，道家者流，陰陽家者流，法家者流，名家者流，墨家者流，縱橫家者流，雜家者流，農家者流，小說家者流。諸子十家，其可觀者，九家而已。**稗官**（漢藝文志）小說家者流，蓋出於稗官，街談巷語，道聽塗說之所造也。如淳曰：王者欲知閭巷風俗，故立稗官，使稱說之。師古曰：稗官，小官。漢名臣奏，唐林請省置吏，公卿大夫至都官稗官各減什三是也。**石交**（史記）棄仇讎而得石交。

【李詳補注】

漢世隱書三句詳案：歌末，當作賦末。漢書藝文志雜賦十二家，隱書居其末。孟堅云：右雜賦十二家二百二十三篇。核其都數，有隱書十八篇在內，則作賦末宜矣。

【楊明照校注拾遺】

諧隱

「隱」，唐寫本作「讔」；元本、弘治本、活字本、汪本、佘本、張本、兩京本、王批本、何本、胡本、訓故本、

合刻本、梁本、謝鈔本、清謹軒本、尚古本、岡本、文溯本、王本、張松孫本、鄭藏鈔本、崇文本並同。文津本剜改作「譺」

按「諧隱」字本止作「隱」。然以篇中「譺者，隱也」證之，則篇題原是「譺」字甚明。王應麟漢書藝文志考證八引作譺，是所見本篇題原爲「譺」字也。

內怨爲俳也。

范文瀾云：「『俳』，當作『誹』。放言曰『謗』，微言曰『誹』。『內怨』，即腹誹也。」

按「內」讀曰「納」。說文人部：「俳，戲也。」「內怨爲俳」，即「納怨爲戲」也。范說似非。

有足觀者。

「足觀」，倫明所校元本作「定稱」；兩京本、胡本同。

按議對、指瑕、總術三篇，並有「足觀」之文，作「定稱」非是。「定」或爲「足」之誤（詔策篇有「足稱母師」語）

是以子長編史，列傳滑稽。

按子長，司馬遷字。（史記自序、漢書司馬遷傳均缺史公字）法言君子篇：「多愛不忍，子長也。」李注：「史記敘事，但美其長，不貶其短，故曰多愛。」漢紀孝武皇帝紀五：「（天漢元年）司馬子長既遭李陵之禍，……遂著史記。」後漢書張衡傳：「（應閒）子長譙之，爛然有第。」章懷注：「司馬遷字子長，作史記。」論衡超奇篇：「若司馬子長、劉子政之徒，累積篇第，文以萬數。」又須頌篇：「司馬

子長紀黃帝以至孝武。」仲長統昌言：「子長、班固，述作之士。」（文選任昉王文憲集序李注引）此司馬遷字之見於兩漢著述者。

但本體不雅。

「雅」，黃校云：「一作『雜』。」

按何本、祕書本作「雅」，天啓梅本改「雅」，黃氏從之，是也。黃氏底本爲萬曆梅本顏氏家訓文章篇：「東方曼倩，滑稽不雅。」

而詆嫚媟弄。

「媟」，黃校云：「元作『媒』，謝改。」梅本作「嫟」，無校語。（此沿馮舒校語）

按訓故本作「娸」，蓋是。漢書枚皐傳：「故其賦有詆娸東方朔。」顏注：「詆，毀也；娸，醜也。」

至魏文因俳說以著笑書。

黃校云：「（文）元作『大』；（笑）元作『茂』，孫改。」此沿梅校

按元明各本皆作「大」，馮舒、何焯始校爲「文」，然未言所據。黃氏竟從而改之，殊違闕疑之義。「大」，疑原是「人」字。「魏人因俳說以著笑書」，蓋指魏邯鄲淳所著之笑林也。文通十五引作「笑」，孫改是。

雖抃推席。

「推」，黃校云：「疑誤。」此沿梅校　何焯校作「忭懽几席。」

范文瀾云：「『推』，當是『帷』字之誤，『抃帷席』，即所謂『衆坐喜笑』也。」

按「抃」下疑脱「笑」字，篇末「搏髀而抃笑哉」句可證。文選曹丕與鍾大理書：「笑與抃會。」亦以「笑」「抃」對舉。「推」，范謂爲「帷」之誤，是也。何校非。劉師培中古文學史第三課謂「推」疑「雅」字

潘岳醜婦之屬。

按岳文已佚。初學記十九引有劉思真醜婦賦，御覽三八二所引較略安仁所作，或亦類是。

束晳賓餅之類。

按張騭文士傳：「束晳曾爲餅賦諸文，甚俳諧。」世說新語雅量篇劉注引

尤而效之。

「而」，黃校云：「一作『相』。」　馮舒云：「『相』當作『而』。」何焯校同

按「相」字蓋涉下而誤。黃氏從馮舒説改爲「而」，是也。元明各本皆作「相」左傳僖公二十四年：「尤而效之，罪又甚焉。」又襄公二十一年：「尤而效之，其又甚焉。」當爲舍人所本。

曾是莠言。

按詩小雅正月：「莠言自口。」毛傳：「莠，醜也。」

豈非溺者之妄笑。

「笑」，黃校云：「元作『茂』，朱改。」此沿梅校

按朱改是也。佘本、訓故本、謝鈔本並作「笑」；均藻一、喻林八九、諧語三、文通十五引同。

昔還社求拯于楚師。

黃校云：「（社）元作『楊』；（拯）元作『極』。」此沿梅校

按梅改是。漢書藝文志攷證八、諧語二、文通引，並作「昔還社求拯於楚師」，何本、梁本、謝鈔本、清謹軒本、尚古本、岡本同。元本、佘本、張本、兩京本、胡本、訓故本「拯」字未誤

昔楚莊齊威，性好隱語。

按黃注僅引史記滑稽傳以證齊威王之好隱語，而於楚莊則缺如。上「伍舉刺荊王以大鳥」句，雖已引史記楚世家以注，但彼文未明言莊王好隱語。當補注。呂氏春秋重言篇：「荊莊王立三年，不聽，而好謎。」新序雜事二：「楚莊王蒞政三年，不治，而好隱戲。」並足爲楚莊王好隱語之證。

至東方曼倩，尤巧辭述。

按漢書東方朔傳：「指意放蕩，頗復詼諧，辭數萬言。」又叙傳述：「東方贍辭，詼諧倡優。」並曼倩巧辭述之證。

而君子嘲隱，化爲謎語。

黃校云：「一本無『嘲』字。」　徐燉校沾「嘲」字。　天啓梅本「子嘲」二字品排刻，當是剜沾「嘲」

字。

按元本、弘治本、活字本、汪本、佘本、張本、兩京本、何本、胡本、萬曆梅本、凌本、合刻本、梁本、祕書本、謝鈔本、彙編本、清謹軒本、王本、鄭藏鈔本、崇文本並無「嘲」字，是也。此處「隱」字作顯隱之隱解，非嘲隱意也。上云「自魏代已來，頗非俳優」，此言其變爲謎語之故耳。

纖巧以弄思。

「思」，黃校云：「元作『忠』，謝改。」此沿梅校

按謝改是。謝鈔本、讔語二引，正作「思」。

夫觀古之爲隱。

按「夫觀」二字當乙。詮賦篇「觀夫荀結隱語」，史傳篇「觀夫左氏綴事」，比興篇「觀夫興之託諭」，事類篇「觀夫屈宋屬篇」，才略篇「觀夫後漢才林」，並作「觀夫」，可證。

搏髀而抃笑哉！

「搏」，弘治本、汪本、張本、兩京本作「摶」。

按作「摶」非是。史記李斯傳：「夫擊甕叩缻彈箏，搏髀而歌呼嗚嗚快耳目文選諫逐客書無目字是者，真秦之聲也。」此「搏髀」二字所本。搏，猶拊也。莊子在宥篇：「鴻蒙方將拊髀雀躍而遊。」樂府篇亦有「拊髀雀躍」語。

振危釋憊。

按史記滑稽列傳序：「談言微中，亦可以解紛。」與此同意。

雖有絲麻，無棄菅蒯。

「菅」，弘治本、汪本、佘本、張本、兩京本、文津本作「管」。文瀾本剜改爲「菅」

按「管」字誤。左傳成公九年：「詩曰：『雖有絲麻，無棄菅蒯。』」杜注：「逸詩也。」

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Abbreviations

BPZ: Baopuzi nei pian 抱朴子内篇

BTSC: Beitang shuchao 北堂書鈔

CXJ: Chuxueji 初學記.

DYJ: *Diaoyu ji* 琱玉集.

FY: Fayan [yishu] 法言義疏

GYZ: *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳

GZJ: *Ganzhu ji* 紺珠集

JS: Jin Shu 晉書

HFZ: *Hanfeizi jinzhu jinyi* 韓非子今注今譯

HHS: *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書

HS: Hanshu 漢書

HSWZ: *Hanshi waizhuan [jinzhu jinyi]* 韓詩外傳今注今譯

LJ: *Liji [zhengyi]* 禮記正義

LLZS: *Leilin zashuo* 類林雜說

LSCQ: *Lüshi chunqiu yizhu* 呂氏春秋譯註

LY: *Lunyu [yizhu]* 論語譯注

MZ: *Mengzi [jijie]* 孟子集解

QSGSDW: Quan Shang Gu Sandai Wen. 全上古三代秦文 (in *Quan shang gu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文)

QHHW: *Quan Hou Han wen* 全後漢文

QJW : *Quan Jin wen* 全晉文

QSGW: Quan San Guo wen 全三國文

SGZ: Sanguozhi 三國志

SJ: Shiji 史記

ShJ: *Shijing [zhuxi]* 詩經注析

SP: *Sunpu* 筍譜

SS: *Suishu* 隋書

ST: *Shitong* 史通

SSXY: *Shishuo xinyu [jianshu]* 世說新語箋疏

SWJZ: *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注.

SY: *Shuiyuan [jiaozheng]* 說苑校證

TPYL: *Taiping yulan* 太平禦覽

WXDL:[Zengding] Wenxin diaolong [xiaozhu] 增訂文心彫龍校注

XX: *Xinxu [jinzhu jinyi]* 新序今注今譯

XZ: *Xunzi* 荀子

YCC: *Yanzi chunqiu [shijie]* 晏子春秋釋解

YWLJ: *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚

YWZ: *Yin Wenzi [jiaozheng]* 尹文子校正

ZGC: *Zhangguo ce [jianzhu]* 戰國策箋注

ZZ: *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋

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Estratto per riassunto della tesi di dottorato

L'estratto (max. 1000 battute) deve essere redatto sia in lingua italiana che in lingua inglese e nella lingua straniera eventualmente indicata dal Collegio dei docenti. L'estratto va firmato e rilegato come ultimo foglio della tesi.

Studente: Giulia Baccini matricola: 955493

Dottorato: Lingue, Culture e Società. Indirizzo in Studi Orientali (Cina)

Ciclo: 23°

Titolo della tesi[849] : The Forest of Laughs (*Xiaolin*): mapping the offspring of self-aware literature in ancient China.

Abstract:

My research is centred on the analysis of the *Xiaolin* (Forest of Laughs), a collection of anecdotes ascribed to Handan Chun (?132–225? AD) a famous scholar of Later Han – Wei period. Today the *Xiaolin* is considered the first specimen of collections of anecdotes specifically written for entertainment purposes. If it is true that *Xiaolin*'s anecdotes had no other aim than entertaining, it can, with reason, be considered the offspring of self-aware literature in ancient China. My research tries to bring evidences to this last statement. In order to do this, I provide a historical survey of the intellectual debate at court among the members of educated elite since Western Han to Wei Jin period. Then, I draw attention to the morphology and the structure of the brief narratives, which are collected under the title of *Xiaolin.* I provide historical information of the author's deeds and compositions, to show him as a characteristic member of the educated elite of his own time. Finally, I present the critical edition of the anecdotes ascribed to the *Xiaolin*, with their translations.

La mia ricerca è concentrata sull'analisi del *Xiaolin* (Foresta di risate), una collezione di aneddoti ascritta a Handan Chun (?132–225? d.C.), famoso studioso della fine degli Han-inizio Wei. Oggi il *Xiaolin* è considerato la prima collezione aneddotica scritta principalmente per intrattenimento. Se è vero che gli aneddoti del *Xiaolin* non hanno altro fine che quello di intrattenere il lettore, questa collezione può, a giusta ragione, essere considerata una delle prime testimonianze della nascita di una letteratura consapevole di sé nella Cina antica. Il mio lavoro cerca di dimostrare quest'ultima affermazione. Per fare ciò, presento un'indagine storica del dibattito intellettuale tra gli studiosi membri dell'elite del periodo Han e Wei. In secondo luogo analizzo le morfologie e le strutture delle brevi narrative raccolte sotto il nome di *Xiaolin*. Successivamente fornisco informazioni storiche sulle opere e le vicende legate all'autore, cercando di metterlo in luce come personaggio caratteristico dell'elite intellettuale della sua epoca. In fine, presento l'edizione critica del testo e la traduzione in inglese degli aneddoti.

Firma dello studente

_____

[849] Il titolo deve essere quello definitivo, uguale a quello che risulta stampato sulla copertina dell'elaborato consegnato.