

## MISCELLANEA

### **The International Conference on Recently Discovered Chinese Manuscripts**

Between 19th and 22nd of August 2000, Beijing University hosted an important event of early Chinese studies, the *International Conference on Recently Discovered Chinese Manuscripts*. The conference was organised by Sarah Allan, Li Boqian and Li Xueqin and funded by the Henry Luce Foundation and Dartmouth College.<sup>1</sup>

In the past few decades a number of early manuscripts have been found during the archaeological excavations carried out on the territory of the People's Republic of China. These manuscripts greatly extended our knowledge about ancient Chinese thinking and everyday life, and in many cases modified our opinions regarding these.

For instance, in December 1993 during the excavation of Guodian Chu Tomb Number One, archaeologists found several bamboo slips with written text on them. A number of texts were found in the tomb dating back to the end of the 4th century BC, among them the earliest (but only partial) manuscript version of the influential ancient book called *Laozi* or *Dao De*

*Jing* (The Book of Way and Virtue), and a so far unknown text which received the title *Tai Yi Sheng Shui* (The Great One Generated Water) upon its publication. A number of signs indicate that this text had originally been a part of *Laozi*, but it got lost during the millennia. The texts found at Guodian – which belong to the most important manuscript findings of recent years – were made available for the researchers by the Wenwu Publishing House in 1998 (*Guodian Chu Mu Zhujian*, Beijing, Wenwu Chubanshe, 1998).

In May 1998 Sarah Allan and Robert G. Henricks hosted the *International Conference on the Guodian Laozi* at Dartmouth College. This conference – as indicated in its title – focused on the *Laozi* and *Tai Yi Sheng Shui* found at Guodian. The proceedings of the conference are summarised, and accompanied with background papers in the following book published recently: Sarah Allan – Crispin Williams, ed., *The Guodian Laozi – Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998*. Berkeley, The Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2000.

This conference at Dartmouth was the first, and the *International Conference on Recently Discovered Chinese Manuscripts* was the second conference on early Chinese manuscripts which was funded by the Henry Luce Foundation and Dartmouth College.

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Sarah Allan for making me possible to participate at the conference and for her support of my research.

The program of the *International Conference on Recently Discovered Chinese Manuscripts* had two major sections: (1) the presentation of newly discovered texts, (2) discussion about the bamboo slips found at Guodian, and about the silk manuscript found at Mawangdui and published under the title *Shi Fa*.

The director of the Shanghai Museum, Ma Chengyuan gave an account of the bamboo-slip manuscripts of adventurous fate which have been bought recently by the museum from an antique shop in Hong Kong. These were stolen from a Chu tomb of the Warring States period by grave-robbers. After their examination the museum decided to buy them. Ma Chengyuan presented some extracts from the yet unpublished texts.

Zhang Chunlong spoke about the bamboo-slip texts found at Cili and Song Guoding about the bamboo-slip manuscripts found at Xincui. These two findings were also excavated on the territory of the former Chu state, and both of them derive from the Warring States period.

Wang Mingqin gave a review about the written bamboo slips from the Qin-era found at Wangjiatai. Certain parts of these slips are considered to be containing the lost text called *Guizang*.

Guo Weimin talked about the bamboo manuscripts from the Western Han period found at Huxishan, and Chen Songchang about the manuscript collection kept at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Hao Benxing, Zhao Shigang, Susan Weld and Crispin Williams gave a report on the texts written on stone objects discovered at Wenxian, and also on the method and procedure of the computerised processing of the findings.

Zhang Changping gave a review of the bamboo manuscripts from the Western Han period discovered at Suizhou in Hubei in March 2000.

Li Xueqin gave an account of the silk manuscript which was partially published<sup>2</sup> under the title *Shi Fa* approximately at the same time the

conference was held, and which was found in the Han Tomb Number Three at Mawangdui. The content of the text resembles some of that in the *Ri Shu* (Book of Days) that was discovered in the Qin Tomb Number 11 at Shuihudi. It is a guide for differentiating between the auspicious and inauspicious days, and at the same time, it contains considerable data on the use of an instrument called a cosmograph (*shi*). (Previously this text was referred to by the name *Zhuanshu Yinyang Wuxing*.)

During the discussions about the texts of Guodian and the silk manuscript called *Shi Fa*, participants expressed their views on a number of subjects, raised and discussed many issues.

In the near future a collection of studies is expected to be published in which the participants of the conference will make the results of their research public and set forth their views.

Participants arrived from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Hungary, Japan, Korea, Norway, the People's Republic of China, Singapore, Taiwan and the United States. The chairmen were Sarah Allan, Roger T. Ames, Tomohisa Ikeda, Li Boqian, Li Xueqin, Ma Chengyuan, Qiu Xigui and Paul Thompson.

The programme was accompanied by an exhibition of original texts at the Sackler Museum, Beijing University. The material displayed was provided by several museums at the disposal of the Sackler Museum for this special occasion.

The conference made it possible for the experts coming from different countries to share their results obtained through their research of manuscripts, to discuss several problems, and also, to get familiar with texts awaiting formal publishing.

Sándor P. Szabó

#### First Conference of Young Orientalists in Hungary

On 18th December 2000 the first conference of young orientalists took place at ELTE (Eötvös Loránd University), Budapest. The basic aim of this special session was to provide an opportu-

<sup>2</sup> Mawangdui Boshu Zhengli Xiaozu: Mawangdui Boshu 'Shi Fa' Shiwen Zhaiyao. *Wenwu* 2000, 7, pp. 85–94.

nity for young orientalists, the majority of whom are Ph.D. students, to hold a lecture on their respective research areas and to sum up their research results. The Committee for Oriental Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, who organised the conference, believed it would provide several advantages. It was a convenient occasion for the elder generation to get to know personally would-be scholars who do not belong to the same institution or to the same field of study. Being from various fields of oriental studies, the lecturers, similarly, could gain an overview of other researchers from various fields. Moreover, financial support has been offered for the participants (and another group of 20 young researchers) to publish the final version of their lecture in a single conference volume. Last, but not least, the young lecturers, who probably had only few occasions to demonstrate their skill of lecturing, could experience and practice this skill in the presence of a larger (sometimes fluctuating) audience. In the following brief description let me summarise the topics of the lectures delivered. Both the field and the lecture descriptions follow a strict alphabetical order.

### *Arabic Studies*

Edina Földessy (ELTE) concentrated on the wedding ceremony of the Tunisian ibadites, a small Islamic ethnic group who live on the island of Djerba. Her main concern was to set this specific ritual in a wider theoretical frame. E. Földessy contrasted the general, tripartite model of A. van Gennep's theoretical assumptions with the specific ceremonies of the ibadites, thus gaining new insights into the ritual structure of this so-far neglected society.

István Tamás Kristó Nagy (Pázmány University), while frequently citing the various opinions in the secondary literature, reinterpreted the 'Manichaean Apology', an important, but rather debated source on the philosophical oeuvre of Ibn al-Muqaffa. Though a major researcher of the text (M. Chokr) rejected the

genuineness of the Apology, the lecturer proposed that one can interpret the text as a rational, dualist critique of the Islam, the Koran, the prophets and monotheism. Thus, the Apology could remain a major source of a bold thinker who, rejecting the validity of the philosophical models of the revelation, created an independent and original philosophical system from the different *zindiq* and Gnostic movements of his time.

Szabolcs Polgár (University of Szeged) stressed the importance of a seemingly minor fact of Istakhri, a Muslim geographer of the 10th century. In his major work, which often derives information from earlier sources, Istakhri mentions the distance of the route between Bulgaria–Kiev and Inner Basdjirt–Bulgaria, which the lecturer, using evidence of various kinds, identifies with the route crossing Volga Bulgaria, Kiev and the Carpathian Basin. Thus, as the designation of Inner Basdjirt refers to the Hungarians of the 10th century, the relationship between them and the Bulgars of Volga could be demonstrated.

Zoltán Szombath (University of Szeged) discussed the legends and tales about Majnūn Laylā, a popular figure in the literature and folk tradition of several Muslim peoples. The representatives of the medieval Arab science of genealogy and history frequently made serious attempts to force the originally folklore (and thus ahistoric) figure into their strict and exact historical system, identifying him with a certain historical personality. Besides discovering the specific nature and process of these identifications, the lecturer warned against the possible misunderstandings of oral folk traditions if it is approached from the perspective of a basically written, urban culture.

### *Assyriology*

Zoltán Pálfi (ELTE) analysed the pictorial representations of ancient Assyrian seals from a historical perspective, i.e. their possible con-

tribution to the reconstruction of the intellectual and religious background of the 2nd millennium BC. After a general historical and technical introduction, the lecturer, concentrating on the Anatolian finds, presented his interpretations on various dimensions of the representations (religion, mythology, material culture, and transport).

### ***Indology***

Ágnes Básti (University of Szeged) emphasised the methodological difficulties when discussing kingship in early Vedic society, which is often labelled as 'ahistoric'. She stressed that one has to combine the philological approach with a more general social history to discover the genuine significance of early Vedic royalty. She has also proposed that the sacred symbols of early Vedic kingship can be most appropriately interpreted in the context of the phenomena of everyday life.

### ***Inner Asian Studies and Mongolian Studies***

Baiarma Khabtagaeva (University of Szeged), contributing to the research of historical morphology of Mongolian, presented her views on Lars Johanson's theory about the affinity of certain lexical groups towards certain suffixes. Using the examples of Mongolian colour-designations, the lecturer found 50 general and 58 colour-specific suffixes, the latter being further subdivided into 4 minor groups. Thus, B. Khabtagaeva furnished evidence for the existence of the relationship of certain suffixes with certain semantic groups.

Zsolt Barta (ELTE) cited evidence to refute the general opinion that the fire-cult among Mongolian people is derived from Iranian practice, and that Mongolian fire-cult is an independent religious phenomenon. He also argued that the cultural heroes in the origin myths on fire are often replaced by the figures of major Khans in

the fire-blessings and fire-prayers, the latter probably belonging to the genre of *dadalga*.

Andrea Iván (ELTE) concentrated on the Buriat version of the otherwise well-documented and intensively researched myth of Maudgalyāyana. A. Iván compared the motifs of the Buriat version with those of the classical Mongolian variants to reveal the paraphrasing process of the original material. In her investigations she concentrated on the figure of Mu Monto and on the new folklore elements of the Buriat version.

In his lecture A. Kovács (ELTE) investigated a yet unresearched period of modern Mongolian history (1989–1990). The lecturer surveyed the various archives, complemented it with field work and extensive interviews, and summarised the effects of mass movements on Mongolian society. The fieldwork started in 1989 and was repeated annually.

### ***Iranian Studies***

János Jany (ELTE) first expounded the two basic forms of Sassanidan jurisprudence, as reflected in the major written source of the period ('The Book of a Thousand Judgements'). The *čāštag* refers to the oral standard and the judge's commentaries on it, while the *kardag* is the designation of the entire process of the actual judicial practice. The lecturer, using examples from marital law, presented his detailed analysis of their intricate relationship, concluding that *kardag* practices had greatly influenced the canonical law.

### ***Japanese Studies***

Beatrix Mecsi (ELTE) discussed the multifunctional role of Bodhidharma (Jap. Daruma) in Japanese society. The lecturer's basic field of research is the iconographic analysis of Bodhidharma's figure in Japan. These investigations were extended to imply the everyday

usage of Daruma-dolls in both Buddhist and folk-religion, hardly separable in the Japanese (and Chinese) context.

Chieko Osugi (Japan) lectured on the past and present status of Japanese language teaching. After summarising the history of Japanese language teaching in Hungary, she proceeded on the various means, aims and results of Japanese language teaching. The lecturer emphasised the fundamental role of JOCV to establish the entire system of this activity in Hungary, which, besides the evident beneficial result of language learning, can also provide an excellent base for the two countries to co-operate at various levels.

### *Sinology*

Gábor Kósa (ELTE) discussed the shamanic component and the mythological heritage of the ancient Chinese state of Chu, stressing that mythic texts which can be connected to this state have preserved more genuine mythical concepts than the ones which underwent the process of historical interpretation.

Sándor P. Szabó (ELTE) demonstrated that a newly discovered text, the *Taiyi shengshui*, unearthed at the Guodian site in 1993, reveals a cosmogonic concept which is strikingly similar to the cosmogonic process described in one of the passages of the more well-known *Liezi*. Analysing the individual stages of this specific cosmogony, the lecturer stressed that this cosmogony was an integral part of the intellectual world of 4th-century BC China.

### *Tibetan Studies*

Tibor Porció (University of Szeged) through investigating the usage of 'bhagavat', contributed to the textual analysis of the Sitātapatrā texts. In the Tibetan tradition there are five Sitātapatrā texts (four in the Canon, plus one in

the unique Kandjur edition of Phug brag). These ritual texts, usually dated to the 6th century, all invoke the goddess Sitātapatrā. These five canonical texts were further complemented by pre-canonical Tibetan translations which were found at Dunhuang.

The lecturer displayed some of his results on the different textual traditions, and the complex relationship among these various Sitātapatrā texts.

### *Turkology*

Krisztián Nemes (ELTE), basically relying on a so-far neglected source (Hidâyet Dîvân), introduced the new concept of "early Azeri literature". He concentrated on its origin, development and major representatives to define this distinct literature. After anchoring it in a wider literary context, he discussed the various roles and social functions of poets at the courtly level; furthermore, he analysed the intellectual and religious background of the period.

Mónika F. Molnár (ELTE) explored the oeuvre of Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658–1730), an Italian scholar and an officer of the engineer corps. M. F. Molnár's investigations, which rely on both Italian and Turkic sources, centre around an important work of Marsigli (*Stato militare dell'Impero Ottomano*). Marsigli's encounters with and descriptions of the Turks in Hungary, well attested in his major book, might give further information on the conditions of the Turkic army in 17th-century Hungary.

Sándor Szathmári (University of Szeged) stated that a serious phonetic analysis of the Kipchak (especially its Nogay branch) spoken in Dobruja, due to the oversimplifications applied in its phonetic description, is still to be done. The lecturer personally collected spoken material of 18 hours, which contains approximately 10,000 words. The importance of this task can be supported by the fact that these idioms have preserved several archaic phonetic features (e.g.

geminate), which are completely lacking in other Turkic languages.

Mariann Zilahy (University of Szeged), through citing a great amount of detailed examples from 21 Turkic languages, stressed that the specific grammatical forms of interrogative verbs are general phenomena in nearly all major Turkic

idioms. The analysis contained a discussion of the two major types (plus more sub-types) of contraction of these specific linguistic structures. M. Zilahy also pointed out the cases when a definite shift of meaning occurred in the idiom.

*Gábor Kósa*