

Lévi Jean , Liu Chaoying, Qi Chong, Peyraube Alain & Bai Gang
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LÉVI Jean, LIU Chaoying, QI Chong, PEYRAUBE Alain & BAI Gang (2005). 齊語 *Discours du Qi: Texte historique de la Chine pré-impériale*. Lyon : ENS Éditions

This small book, an annotated translation of one of the chapters of the Classical *Guoyu* is conceived as teaching material for a course in Classical Chinese. It is divided into twelve lessons according to the division inherent in the text. Each chapter consists of:

- (1) the original text in Chinese characters
- (2) *pinyin*: Qi Chong is responsible for the transcription and also for phonetic notes given for *e.g.* characters with different readings.
- (3) a translation from the Classical text into Modern Mandarin prepared by Liu Chaoying
- (4) a translation into French and
- (5) a glossary including toponyms and anthroponyms. The translation and the glossary are prepared by Jean Lévi who is also responsible for the introduction and the commentaries.

Many special terms in the glossary are provided with comprehensive explanations which are very useful for the student, since they are frequently not available in the general dictionaries. Furthermore, each chapter contains the syntactic analysis and a literal word for word translation of some exemplary sentences which show a particular grammatical structure or include words which require explanations (for these analyses Jean Lévi, Alain Peyraube, Bai Gang, Qi Chong and Liu Chaoying are responsible). Almost all of the chapters additionally include a commentary which provides historical and cultural information and anchors the narrated events in their historical or philosophical backgrounds. Each chapter is rounded off with a few questions mostly concerning lexical or grammatical but also sometimes historical issues. The answers to these

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questions can be found at the end of the book. This clear structuring makes the book a very useful tool for the study of Classical Chinese, with regard to both its language and its culture.

I am very glad that the author selected a part from the *Guoyu* 國語, a text which has always been underestimated in sinological literature, but which in my opinion certainly belongs to the more interesting texts of the time, from the point of view of both its language and its content. The text is presented clearly and difficult parts are usually accompanied by sufficient information to become clear to the reader. Reference is regularly made to other Classical texts which exhibit parallels or deal with the same problems as the *Guoyu*. A short introduction 'Présentation' precedes the main part of the book.

In the first part of this introduction a synopsis of the content of the text and of the discussion on the authorship and the date of composition is provided and the relation of the text with the *Zuozhuan* is succinctly discussed. Some of the earlier philological and linguistic studies on the *Guoyu* are briefly mentioned, e.g. the work of Karlgren and that of Zhang Yiren who devoted much of his scientific life to the study of the *Guoyu*, but unfortunately these studies do not appear in the bibliographical references. A reference to Wei Juxian who presented one of the most important studies as far as the dating problem is concerned appears only in a footnote and a reference to the thoroughly researched article of Zhang Yiren, William G. Boltz and Micheal Loewe in Micheal Loewe's *Early Chinese Texts* has been omitted altogether. I assume that this disregard is due to the fact that the authors intend to study the text from a different perspective than the studies mentioned above. These former studies mostly deal with problems of authenticity and dating, the relation between the *Guoyu* and the *Zuozhuan*, or with purely philological issues; whereas the study under consideration explicitly centres on the internal structure of the text and its relation

to the particular political and cultural situation of its time – as has been indicated by Jean Lévi in the introduction. Lévi reveals how the structure of the text mirrors its literary and historical background in drawing a connection to the *Guofeng* of the *Shijing* and in assuming that both texts have a common paedagogical intention.

This general introduction is followed by a short analysis of the text in its entirety mainly concentrating on a résumé of the first chapter of the *Guoyu*, the *Zhouyu*, and on the chapters dealing with Lu and Qi on the one hand, and Wu and Yue on the other, which according to Lévi can be considered to be contrastive pairs regarding their political concepts, an analysis which seems quite convincing to me. This part of the introduction is concluded by a short description of the remaining parts of the text, namely those dealing with the states Chu, Zheng and Jin and with a short analysis of the particular role the *Jinyu* plays, which represents the longest section of the *Guoyu*.

The second part of the introduction is entirely devoted to the text selected for the book, the *Qiyu*, which exclusively centres on the dialogues between the ruler of the state of Qi 齊, Huangong 桓公 and his counsellor Guan Zhong 管仲 on Qi's way to hegemony. Lévi reveals the relation of the *Qiyu* with the *Guan zi* which both drew from the same sources. The administrative system as proposed by Guan Zhong is placed in its historical context and evaluated as anachronistic since it depicts the political system of the important states of the Warring States period two or three centuries after the time of the duke Huan and not the historical situation of Qi under the reign of duke Huan itself.

‘Car ce qu’il décrit ce n’est nullement la situation historique du Qi à l’époque du duc Huan, mais le mode de fonctionnement des grandes principautés au temps des Royaumes Combattants, deux ou trois siècles plus tard.’
(Présentation, p. 15)

Additionally, Lévi refers to the idealistic view from which the personality and the reign of duke Huan are presented; all references revealing the more negative features in the character of duke Huan are left out.

According to these introductory remarks and to the way in which the text is commented on in the main part of the book, it obviously concentrates predominantly on the comprehension of the text in its historical and cultural context and not on an attempt at a literal translation of the text and a thorough linguistic analysis as Lévi himself remarks:

‘Sans être littéral – mais la littéralité existe-t-elle ? – notre version se borne à rendre les dénotations en négligeant les connotations, qui pourtant jouent un rôle essentiel dans la prose classique chinoise, toujours très rhétorique.’ (p.17)

and also:

‘Là encore nous ne prétendons nullement offrir un précis de grammaire du chinois classique, mais plutôt apporter un outil, des béquilles qui peuvent fournir un appui à l’analyse grammaticale et permettre l’acquisition rapide de certaines règles de base.’ (p.18)

From the way it is conceived, this book certainly serves to familiarize the student of Chinese with the world of political and philosophical thought represented in the *Qiyu* and with the historical and intellectual context in which it has to be viewed. Taking a linguistic perspective, a more literal translation would sometimes have been useful for a better comprehension of the linguistic structure of the text, but the translations presented show a profound knowledge of the Classical Chinese language and a great insight into the cultural background of the narrative and are from this point of view certainly fully justified. Most of the syntactic analyses are clear and correct and focus on central structures in the

Classical Chinese language, but without referring to any discussions on the respective syntactic phenomena in the linguistic literature. Consequently a more detailed analysis and / or a short comment on the historical development would occasionally have been wished for, e.g. for the third syntactic analysis in chapter III, p. 50:

- (1) 卑聖侮士，而唯女是崇
 Bei / sheng / wu / shi // er / wei / nü / shi / chong
 [s. élidé] / v. / compl. d'objet direct / v. / compl. d'objet direct //, conj. de coordination / adv. / compl. d'objet direct / pron. (compl. d'objet direct) / v. //

Traduction littérale :

[il] / rabassait / les sages / (et) méprisait / les preux, alors / seulement / les femmes / celles-là / (il) vénérail.

The analysis of the second clause of this sentence which shows one of the few exceptional cases where the object is permitted in preverbal position – namely, between the subject and the verb – in Classical Chinese is found in the answer section at the end of the book (p.165) and although I fully agree with the analysis given there, it could have been somewhat more detailed and might have included the fact that this particular structure is typical for the Classical language but lost its productivity already during the Han period.

More cases similar to this could be presented but I would like to confine myself to a very few which seem to me to be a little problematic.

1. The analysis of the relative pronouns *zhe* 者 and *suo* 所 as it is presented in the second example analysed of the first chapter (p. 29)

- (2) 若必治國家者，則非臣之所能也。
 Ruo / bu / zhi / guojia / zhe //, ze / fei / chen / zhi / suo /
 neng / ye
 - sub. thème = conj de subordination / adv. (v. / compl.
 d'objet direct / partic. relative //
 - prop. principale = (s.sous-entendu) / conj. / copule à la
 forme négative / s. de la prop. relative / partic. de
 subordination / partic. relative / v. de la prop. relative /
 partic. finale //

Traduction littérale :

(Pour) ce qui est de / absolument / gouverner / le royaume //, alors /
 (ce) n'est pas / ce / dont / votre subalterne / est capable.

The grammatical analysis is found at the end of the book (p. 164), but although it indicates the part of speech the relative pronoun (the relative particle, according to the authors) refers to, the difference between both *zhe* 者 and *suo* 所 is in my opinion not made clear enough, since it does not explicitly include the constraint on the relative pronoun *suo* 所 always to refer to the object (also the locative object) of the verb. According to my experience, the difference between both relative pronouns is sometimes difficult to comprehend for students of Chinese and accordingly a more detailed explanation might have been useful. Similar to this analysis, the analysis of *yu* 於 as a marker of the passive immediately following in the third answer (p. 164) seems to be rather simplified, since *bei* 被 and *yu* 於 differ considerably syntactically.

In contrast to these analyses, the analysis of the differences between the Classical conjunction *ze* 則 and the modern Mandarin conjunction *jiu* 就 as it appears in answer 4 to chapter VI (p. 166) is – though concise – very useful as is the analysis of the adverb *ji* 既 in answer 4 to chapter VII (p. 167) which very concisely refers to

one of the most important characteristics of this adverb. More analyses of this kind would have increased the value of the book correspondingly, just as more detailed grammatical analyses and some references to the linguistic literature in general would have done.

But since the explicit focus of this book does not lie in a thorough linguistic analysis of the text, this conciseness of the grammatical explanations can certainly be justified.

Nevertheless, I would like to note a few further problems I perceived with particular analyses.

These are:

1. The analysis of the fourth structure analysed in chapter V (p. 82):

(3) 則事可以陰令，可以寄政。

Ze / shi / ke yi / yin / ling //, ke yi / ji / zheng //

Conj./ s. / v. / v. / compl. //, [le même s. élidé] / v. / v. / compl. /

Traduction littérale :

Alors / les affaires militaires / peuvent / être cachées / [par] des édits //, [elles] / peuvent / être abrités / [par] / le gouvernement civile //.

To the footnote is added: ‘Le modal *ke* indique qu’il s’agit sans doute ici de phrases passives.’

Here I would like to refer to Pulleyblank (1995: 23/24) who states that

‘a transitive verb in an active sense, or an intransitive verb requires *ke yi* 可以, rather than *ke* alone. ... In this construction *yi* 以, which as a verb means ‘use’ and as a coverb (or preposition) is used for the instrument, fills the role of passive transitive verb complement to *ke*. That is, the meaning of the instrument is extended to include agency

This analysis is not only found in Pulleyblank, but in other linguistic studies as well. According to this analysis, in the instance of the modal *ke* 可 presented here, the verb modified by the modal certainly has to be analysed as transitive, since *ke* 可 is followed by *yi* 以. The corresponding translation would be:

‘Then, regarding the military affairs one has to hide his orders and to rely on the government.’

2. The referent of *yan* 焉 in the first analysed structure of chapter VI (p. 98):

- (4) 君親問焉，
 Jun / qin / wen / yan,
 s. / adv. / v. / partic. finale à valeur circonstancielle (= prép.
 + pron.-objet : *yan* = 於 + 之)
 le duc / en personne // [les] interrogait / à ce sujet,

In this example, *yan* 焉, analysed as *yu zhi* 於之, certainly refers to the person to whom the question is directed and who is the indirect object in Chinese and not at all to the subject of the question, represented by the direct object. The literal translation suggests – to a certain extent misleadingly – that it refers to the subject of the question which is represented by the indirect object in French.

But these minor problems do not diminish the value of the book which despite its conciseness in some respects seems to me a very well conceived introduction to Classical Chinese which provides students with a lot of historical and cultural background information that can lead them to a profound understanding of the internal structure and the sense of the text. It also allows the student to gain some familiarity with most of the basic structures of the language of the time. Altogether, I would like to express the great pleasure I had reading this translation of the *Qiyu* and its

commentaries and I trust that many French speaking students of Classical Chinese will participate in this pleasure.

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