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*Chinese
History
and
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*Scientific Editors
Augustin Palát, PhD., M. A.
Timoteus Pokora, PhD.*

*CHINESE
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*Jaroslav
Průšek*

Collection of Studies



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FOREWORD

The studies contained in this volume arose over the last thirty years. Originally the range of the materials I intended to include in my selection was very much wider. Publishing difficulties, however, have obliged me to curtail them to something less than half the planned content. At first I intended to include all the studies I supposed might be of interest to readers and represent contributions still of some significance for research in this domain of Oriental scholarship.

When the necessity arose to limit the contents I gave preference to the standpoint of thematic completeness rather than to what would be of interest to the general reader. Thus in this volume I have confined myself to two thematic fields only—Old Chinese literature and studies dealing with mediaeval storytellers' productions—*hua-pen*. I have excluded the whole complex of historical studies and all studies relating to the new literature. I am now preparing, on the principal historical theme on which I was engaged already in the period of my studies in Prague under Prof. J. Bidlo, and then in 1928 till 1930, with Prof. B. Karlgren in Sweden and Prof. G. Haloun in Halle, in Germany, a more compendious study in which I hope to sum up the results of my research, and I also intend to publish a volume of selected studies dealing with the New Chinese literature at some later date.

Similarly, I have not included in the section devoted to *hua-pen* my most recent study; *The Origins and the Authors of the hua-pen*, as it is to be published as a separate book in the series, *Dissertationes*, Praha 1968, and its length would unduly burden the compass of this volume. For the same reasons, I have omitted here my study on the realism of the mediaeval *hua-pen*, published in Part Five of the book, *Die Literatur des befreiten China und ihre Volkstraditionen*, Praha 1955, under the title, *Die realistischen Traditionen der chinesischen Literatur*. I have also omitted my linguistic studies, as being of interest to only a limited circle of readers, who can always acquire access to them through the usual methods of reproduction.

On the results of my study of the particles *ti* and *ty*, I shall come back in another connexion.

Thus my book falls into two clearly differentiated parts; The first part contains a number of studies devoted to various aspects of the Old Literature

up to the end of the Ch'ing Period. The majority of these studies arose in connexion with my translations of works, which were the object of my study, into Czech. As a rule, the translation of a work awakened my deeper interest in the author and the work and posed certain questions which required an answer. I also discovered that one can only say something of substance about a foreign literary work when one has translated it and so made intimate and tangible contact with its artistic structure and style. Thus most of these studies are accompanied by a translation into Czech of the work to which they relate, as, for instance, translations of Sun-tzū, P'u Sung-ling, Liu O, and others. The *hua-pen* studies, too, are supplemented by two volumes of translations, one Czech, the other German, in the preparation of which I intensively shared.

This somewhat curious division of my work into a series of translations and accompanying studies did not, however, follow from any special working plan, but was due rather to the force of circumstances. After my return to Czechoslovakia in the autumn of 1937 and, especially, from the time of the Munich capitulation, I was completely cut off from the world and dependent on the few books which then existed in Prague relating to my field of studies. There could be no thought of any more broadly based research. I had, therefore, no other choice than to translate and try to interpret the texts which I presented for publication. Thus arose my studies on Sun-tzū and his "Art of War", on Liu O's novel, *Lao Ts'an yu-chi*, and a number of others on various representatives of modern Chinese literature. Even these researches were rendered difficult by the fact that in Prague there was for example, not a single complete set of Chavannes' *Les Mémoires Historiques* or of Legge's *Chinese Classics*, not to speak of the lack of Chinese indexes and other basic works. It was a problem to check up even on the simplest data and facts. Not till my visit to China in 1950-1951, was I able to purchase the basic Chinese editions and so lay the foundations in Prague of a sinological library, which we named after the great writer and thinker, Lu Hsün, whose *Na-han*, 'Battle-cry', was the first book I translated after my return from the Far East in 1937. I had made contact with Lu Hsün during my sojourn in China, in 1932-34, and Lu Hsün wrote the Introduction to my translation. And though our library cannot bear comparison with the great libraries of the West, it still provided a sufficiently firm basis for Chinese studies in Czechoslovakia.

Thus the greater part of the studies included in the first section of this volume arose in Prague after my return from the Far East. It was not, however, only an insufficiency of materials and contacts which made our work difficult. At that time we were passing through a whirl of political changes, acts of aggression and ideological revolutions such as are perhaps unparalleled in history. Not only were we threatened with physical liquidation, under very cruel circumstances, but at the same time all certainties and values hitherto created by humanity were disintegrating and collapsing. Moreover, we experienced,

in addition to the collapse of whole systems of thought, the breakdown of the methods of scientific investigation. It is almost incredible how long it took us to link up, for instance, with the methods of literary science worked out here in Prague previous to 1937, and then only partially. Our path was amazingly tortuous and confused, costing us great loss in time and energy.

Whereas the studies contained in the first part of the present volume all arose in Prague, those in the second part were written for the most part abroad, in China and Japan, where I spent the years 1932-37. I went to the Far East with quite different intentions: I was filled with enthusiasm for the works of Werner Sombart and Max Weber and other researchers in economic history and intended to devote myself to a study of Chinese economic history. In my quest for sources which would enlighten me as regards the economical and social life of Old China, however, I came across the creations of Chinese mediaeval storytellers, the *hua-pen* texts. I was fascinated by these colourful pictures of life in Chinese mediaeval cities, by the combined realism and lyricism of these tales and, under the spell of that fascination, I began to seek other examples of this genre and to study them. An excellent opportunity to extend my studies in this field was offered by my stay in Japan, from 1934 to 1937, where the libraries contained the largest number of these productions, which it was necessary to re-discover, investigate and interpret anew, so that they might occupy their rightful place in the history of Chinese literature. The first three studies in Part Two were practically completed during my stay in Japan, though they were first published after my return. In the course of my researches I was greatly attracted by the outstanding personalities of Wang Kuo-wei, Lu Hsün, Cheng Chen-to, Ma Lien, Shionoya and Nagasawa, most of whom I knew personally and whose works I studied and learned to love and honour. I was able, in China and Japan, to draw upon the rich collections in Peking and Tokyo, while also taking abundant advantage of the kind help of my friends, especially Cheng Chen-to and Ma Lien. However, after my return to Prague, in this field, too, the lack of further materials set a close limit to my researches. Indeed, only in more recent years have I been able to return to this theme somewhat better equipped, but even today it is not possible to overstep certain bounds.

The very fact of my contacts with the above-mentioned scholars, who all played a significant role in the forming of a new Chinese literature, could not but awaken in me a lively interest in that production. This was further strengthened by my desire to become acquainted with contemporary Chinese life and its problems through the medium of modern literature. I read the principal works and made acquaintance with certain of their authors. It was not a systematic study; in the existing situation, there could be no thought of a planned investigation of some more comprehensive theme, as it would have required considerably more means than any institution was able at that time

to grant me. I wished to satisfy my curiosity, eventually to seek out works suitable for translation into Czech. It was these translations and the studies following them up, which I prepared during the War, that first led me to a more systematic study of modern literature. Round the Oriental Institute in Prague there formed a circle of ardent scholars whose researches have today already laid the foundations for a deeper knowledge of the new Chinese literature. I hope to be able to publish my contributions to this domain in another volume.

The limits set to the materials contained in this selection have imposed a kind of duality on the organization of the book. For, whereas the articles devoted to Old Chinese literature remain independent units, those relating to mediaeval storytellers' literature form more or less a whole, and this had to be taken into consideration in the general arrangement of the volume. Each study has its individual list of Chinese characters, individually numbered. I consider this to be more convenient than a general glossary, obliging the reader to seek every word or term in an alphabetically arranged index, which because of the homophonic character of Chinese words is not always very handy. Then the printing of such a glossary here in Prague, where we have not Chinese characters at our disposal, would be attended with difficulties. On the other hand, the bibliographical data are presented differently for each part. In the part devoted to Old Chinese literature, the bibliography is listed separately for each study and requires no comment. In the second part, devoted to *hua-pen*, the bibliography is summarized at the end and references to this list are made in the individual studies. The capital letters A, B, C, and so on, refer to the relevant part of the Bibliography, which is thematically divided up, A referring to Modern Chinese and Japanese Studies, B to the list of *hua-pen* texts, and so on. The number following the capital letter indicates the order of the work cited in the appropriate section. I have tried in this way to avoid endless repetition of the same data and also to provide exact information as to which text was used in this or that case. The bibliography which I have drawn up for the studies devoted to *hua-pen* is not an attempt at a synthetic bibliography of this order of literature: for this the necessary premisses are lacking in Prague, as, for instance, a large part of the Japanese materials. It comprises only those works which I have made use of in my studies and which I actually had at my disposal. I have thus not included in the list titles of which I have only second-hand knowledge.

*Ancient Literature,
Literature of the Ch'ing Period
Folklore*

Part I

*SOME BASIC
FEATURES OF
CHINESE CULTURE**

1

Let us devote our attention in this article to a consideration of some of the basic features of Old Chinese culture, which gradually evolved in China from the third millennium B.C. Present-day culture, even though it links up to a considerable extent with old traditions, is developing within the framework of the fundamental views and principles of socialism, and its problems are closely related to the cultural problems with which all the countries of the socialist camp are confronted. It is thus no longer a purely Chinese manifestation. Old Chinese culture, on the other hand, despite its absorption of many foreign elements, as, for instance, Indian and Antique, transformed and assimilated them to its basic principles, so that it presents a more homogeneous structure than that of any other world culture. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why today we speak of Chinese culture as a classical culture, a closer acquaintance with which may have for humanity as great a significance as had the re-discovery of Antique culture in the Renaissance. In the chaos of widely varying trends and views in which the European community has found itself caught up since the middle of the 19th century, when its cultural life ceased to have any distinctive style or order, such a monumental culture, cast in a single mould, has a singular attraction, for in it all details are subordinated to general principles and harmonised to merge into a unified whole, so that instead of breaking up a cultural unity they assist and strengthen it. Naturally, in order to isolate the basic principles of this monumental structure, we should need to analyse the whole topic of Chinese society, sketch its economic foundations, describe its state philosophy, its ethics and morality. This, however, is not our aim, nor would it be possible to realize it within the limits of a single article. We wish only to notice some of the features which at once strike anybody who comes into contact with things Chinese, whether by way of reading a Chinese poem or buying a lacquer box or going to see an exhibition of Chinese painting or drinking tea from a cup of Chinese procelain.

In each of these situations, he will be impressed by the remarkable feeling of the Chinese for beauty, for perfection of form, by their need and ability to

* New Orient Bimonthly 1 (1960), No 1, pp. 1-3.

surround themselves with things of grace and refinement. This superlative sense of beauty, harmony and fitness is the other reason why we designate Chinese culture a classical culture, that is, something perfect in its kind, and why it is repeatedly bracketed with Antique culture. But these two cultures, both aesthetically excellent, are so different that we might well see in them the opposite poles of human sensibility and artistic endeavour. Perhaps a comparison will help to throw into relief the special qualities of Chinese art, as being generally less well-known in Europe.

Antique culture is probably best symbolized in our conceptions by a white marble statue or group of statuary (not originally uncoloured) in the midst of monumental architecture. In the Antique world, the centre of all is Man and his work. Nature is somewhere on the fringe of interest, man either ignoring it or adapting it to his requirements, to his man-made architecture, to which end he clips and trims it, reducing its endless variety and confining its exuberance to regular and artificial forms.

Chinese culture finds its aptest representation in a picture on which is painted a bizarre stone, a nosegay of flowers, two brilliantly coloured little birds, perhaps a group of hills silhouetted against the background and somewhere in the corner, the indistinct and indistinguishable little figure of a man, representing not a certain person, but a category required by the situation depicted— a fisherman, a woodman, a scholar or a monk.

Or, again, the Antique world loved the perfection of the human body and so depicted it usually in the nude. China completely lacked interest in the human body and devoted all her love to the other creations of Nature. In contrast to the exaggerated individualism of Antiquity, we find in China the suppression of individuality; one must realize that all Chinese metaphysical doctrines aimed at overcoming the illusion of human individuality, of personal exclusiveness and strove help man to merge completely in the Universal. Thus, whereas in Antique art, Man thrusts himself forward into the foreground, in Chinese art he tries to efface himself, to immerge and be swallowed up in the infinite anonymity of Nature. In consequence, as compared with Antique pathos and monumentality, Chinese art is distinguished by its informal and intimate character.

Only rarely did Chinese art glorify war and aggression, finding much more frequent inspiration in a quiet and simple life somewhere in a country cottage, surrounded by hills. And though Chinese art ran its course of development for almost two and a half thousand years in the context of Oriental despotism, it rarely descends to panegyrics, to the eulogizing and magnifying of the great ones of this world, which was, for instance, so usual a feature of cultures in the Near East. Much more commonly, the attitude it revealed to the Emperor and the ruling class was critical, or even negative and hostile. And whereas Antique art served, above all, the needs of public life, Chinese art, though capable of

creating an immense architectural complex, such as the Imperial Palace in Peking or the magnificent tombs of the Ming dynasty in the semi-circle of hills to the north of the city, aimed for the most part at beautifying private life by creating things of a small and intimate kind and impressing with the hallmark of artistic perfection the objects of common and everyday use. This desire to provide an aesthetically satisfying and congenial milieu for people to live in represents an undeniably democratic trait in Chinese art. A private individual cannot as a rule commission a monumental statue or acquire a large and complicated painting, but every educated Chinese could afford a small Chinese ink painting or a miniature colour improvisation—and, as a matter of fact, the majority could create their own artistic environment, for every educated person could write verses or paint beautiful characters, while painting derived directly from the calligraphic art. He himself laid out his miniature garden in front of his window or even in a bowl in his room. Thus it was that art was not then confined to some special occasion, to be enjoyed only at a meeting in the square or at the observance in church or temple of some sacred rite but was an inseparable part of everyday life and living.

This tendency to serve intimate and everyday needs unavoidably gave to Chinese art a certain character of improvisation and dilettantism. And this same tendency, combined with a deep love of Nature, led to a simplicity and unaffected spontaneity, which are further distinctive features of Chinese art. If the individual is to be the maker of his own beautiful living environment, he must make use of the simplest means—a picture conjured up by a few strokes of the brush, an arrangement of flowers in a bamboo vase. The more complicated and sophisticated the artistic objects with which a man surrounds himself, the thicker the wall he sets up between himself and Nature and the more effectually he cuts himself off from the most proper sources of his emotional life. And so we should have around us as few things as possible and of the simplest kind, but perfectly designed.

There can be no question that the Chinese artist had as infallible sense of formal perfection as the Greek or Roman artist but this feeling for beauty of form led in the two cultures to diametrically opposite extremes. Antique art had as its ideal a carefully composed and balanced representation corresponding exactly and in detail to the reality of which it is the artistic embodiment, even though that reality is grasped and portrayed more in its static than in its dynamic aspects, and often with a certain degree of conscious idealisation. Chinese art, too, is not unacquainted with such perfectly rendered representations of reality in sculpture and in painting but very soon this tendency favouring the artistic organisation of carefully worked-out detail to form an integrated and complex work of art was to give way to the desire to seize the whole rather than meticulously built-up detail, the fleeting impression of a moment rather than its static qualities. At bottom, the difference lies in a completely different

approach to reality, but it would be an error of judgement to wish to give priority to one over the other.

It is, indeed, a highly debatable point whether it is more commendable to give a faithful but static representation of reality, or whether a work of art should seize and document it as a transitory and passing impression. Indisputable alone is the fact that both approaches exist. Certainly the Chinese attitude to reality is reflected in the marked simplification of detail in Chinese pictures, its reduction to a few essential elements, often transformed and rearranged. The Chinese artist does not paint, with painstaking attention to detail, a given branch or spray of blossom but by endless repetition tries to seize its basic shape and rhythm, till it is stripped of all unessential detail, what remains being the typical and the significant, the symbol of reality rather than a copy. These simplified and reduced elements are then used by the artist in the composition of his picture, which again aims not at the rendering of any specific reality, but at evoking a certain poetic vision and mood. The principles of composition are essentially aesthetic and only in small measure controllable in their correspondence to reality and actual relations. These two tendencies—the striving after an intimate and personal art and the rearrangement of individual elements according to the requirements of the composition as a whole, subordinated to its own aesthetic laws, are the two operative factors which bring Chinese art so close to us and make it seem so modern. We may, indeed, affirm that whereas the art of the first two-thirds of the 19th century was related in its main tendencies to Antique art, present-day art shows strong affinities with Chinese art. There is no doubt that a composition such as that of Ch'i Pai-shih—three layers of rapid brush-strokes, divided by two horizontal lines, perhaps indicating a bower, and several light purple blobs representing a bunch of grapes or some other cluster of fruit—is a perfectly modern picture, stemming from the same compositional principles as the pictures of Matisse or Rousseau. Here the elements taken over from reality have a mainly aesthetic function and their relation to reality is very attenuated. In the same way, Chinese calligraphy is an abstract art in the best sense—a masterly composition of freely-drawn strokes, lines and forms.

Between the abstract art of the Occident and this art of China, however, yawns an unbridgeable gulf, which places it in quite a different context and gives it an altogether different sense and significance. Ch'i Pai-shih's picture aims to evoke in the observer the pleasing emotions with which the contemplation of beauty fill us, soothing us and helping to create in us a harmonious happiness of mood. Chinese art dwells exclusively in the garden of beauty, sealed off from all unpleasant emotions such as terror, fear, loathing, and banning all that is ugly, unnatural or monstrous. On leaving the world of western abstract art we are filled with distaste and horror, as if awakening from some terrible nightmare. It is a world of sick and monstrous phantasy, a world stricken with

the palsy of fear and the despair of pessimism. Chinese art, on the contrary, is optimistic, shows us how much beauty is in the world around us and, moreover, can distill this natural beauty, raise it to a higher power, recompose it in the loveliest and most effective pictorial symbols and designs. For this reason, Chinese abstract art can be of immense importance for a socialist society, for in it the need for beauty and the desire that it should permeate the whole of life will undoubtedly continue to grow.

Despite the weakening of the ties between this art, too, and reality, Chinese abstract art never becomes meaningless or unintelligible. Even though we may find it difficult to name the flowers that make up Ch'i Pai-shih's nosegay, it is always perfectly clear that he wishes to show us the beauty of a bunch of flowers, that we are to recall an old arbour somewhere in a country garden on a clear autumn day, that we should evoke anew the crystal-clear mood of a day with flowers. The emotional sphere is quite unambiguously defined, there is no doubt as to what the artist intended us to feel, for the meaning is so clear that he who runs can read. I should go so far as to say that the picture by being denuded of all specific detail and freed from all direct relation to reality enables it to achieve universal validity— the picture evokes not one bunch of flowers or one mood, but the aesthetic associations connected with the theme in all its variations. Similarly the most artistic calligraphy can be deciphered and the most bizarre and dashing painted characters are legible and so able to convey a meaning. This art has not slipped away into the mists, where not even its creator knows any longer what it is meant to represent and a picture becomes an unconnected and unintelligible riddle, for it is still bound up with man and his world through its purpose and meaning.

We come across these analogies with modern art in all fields of Chinese creative effort and so every meeting with classical Chinese art is something in the nature of a discovery for the European public. Thus, for instance, the notable successes of the Peking Opera in the West are to be attributed, above all, to the liberation of what were originally symbolic and imitative elements—facial make-up associated with a certain character—the use of histrionic gesture to conjure up a certain scenic illusion—a dance representing a certain action in the plot—music evoking a certain mood—from too close dependence on realistic conceptions, so that their aesthetic aspects could be developed, remoulded and transformed, till there arose a new, magical, colourful, artificial and immensely versatile world of the theatre, with its own aesthetic canons and its own laws. Its aim is quite simply to give aesthetic enjoyment, to create a world of beauty and at the same time express the noble ideas of its creator or even to give them greater emphasis, because they are presented in a perfect art form. And so we might consider each domain of Chinese art in turn and everywhere we should find how up-to-date are the principles governing Chinese art and how much that art has to contribute to our present-day problems. We must

not forget, however, that classical Chinese art could rise to such immense heights only because never for a moment did it betray its fundamental mission of refining man, of educating him and making him a better human being. Beauty was the principal gateway leading to the basic Chinese virtue, *jen* — to humanity, to humaneness. And this noble mission was what prevented it from degenerating into an empty formalistic plaything.

HISTORY AND EPICS IN CHINA AND IN THE WEST*

2

A STUDY OF DIFFERENCES IN CONCEPTION OF THE HUMAN STORY

My study cannot give more than some comments on a very extensive theme that requires a number of studies which have not even been precisely formulated, as yet. I should like to show that the specific thought pattern, the specific perception of reality, intrinsic to a specific cultural category—that which is the predominant one in the given cultural complex—influences all other categories and determines their nature. I want to illustrate my thesis on the relationship between literature and history. With some exaggeration I would formulate my thesis as follows: as literature is, so is history; the same perception of reality is in the background of both and determines their form. I will limit myself to this theme and I will not deal with the causes determining the differences of pattern in various fields of a certain culture; I will not attempt to solve the philosophical and sociological problems, neither will I seek for further connections in the total cultural complex, with which I illustrate my thesis, that is the Chinese cultural complex, although it would not be too difficult. I leave apart the question of language although I fully realize its extreme importance for our problem.

When I confront the phenomena of Chinese culture and the culture of Europe—as far as history is concerned I cite specifically examples of Greek history—I do not intend to speak of their basic differences or collate material to prove such differences. I am more inclined to think that similar differences could be found in any two cultural spheres. The European material serves only for a better understanding of the basic features of Chinese literature and history.

I do not speak about anything entirely new, as the connections between Greek historiography and literature, especially the epics, have been pointed out time and again. To refresh your memory I cite the example of the characterization of Herodotus' *History* by the outstanding Czech scholar of Greek literature, Professor Ferdinand Stiebitz¹: "The structure of (Herodotus) history resembles the epic technique. Just as a large number of epic events are piled around the main narrative line in the *Iliad*, so it is in the *History*, especially

* Read at the meeting of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic studies, Tokyo 1961. Printed in *Diogenes* No 42, 1963, pp. 20—43.

¹ Herodotus, *Z dějin východních národů* (From the History of the Eastern Nations) (Praha 1941), Preface, p. 14.

in the first volume. Although the leading motif links all these narratives, it often does so very freely, so that despite the unifying idea the result is not a homogeneous whole. It is similar with the *Iliad*. The motif of the *History* itself is also related to the motif of the *Iliad* (the hostilities between two sides) and in some details Herodotus also imitated the epic technique. Even his style leans heavily on the epic mode. To a certain extent the work of Herodotus can be described as an epos extended into prose.'

To fully elucidate the meaning of this characterization of Herodotus' *History* as an epic work, we quote the definition of epics given by Hirt in his book *Das Formgesetz der epischen, dramatischen und lyrischen Dichtung* (Berlin 1923), pp. 43-44:

'Das Problem des Epikers heisst daher: Haltung haben, Einheit schaffen, damit nicht Atome aller Zeiten und Räume durcheinander wirbeln, sondern womöglich doch auch eine *Art fliessender Handlung von gleichmässiger Stete*, Dichte, Konkretheit erreicht wird.' And elsewhere (p. 28) he elaborates his idea as follows: 'Wer möglichst auf Darstellung dringt, muss den Treppenabsatz meiden, muss Stete, ununterbrochenen Fluss auch der Zeitstufe suchen und daher so komponieren, dass von einem kräftigen Ausgang ab ununterbrochen weiter geführt werden kann, ohne Plusquamperfekthandlung...'

Herodotus' *History* certainly presents a good example of a narration which flows as a powerful stream from the very beginning. An even more perfect example of a grand epic composition is Thucydides' history. From its famous beginning "Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war, and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it;"² it develops a great drama of struggle which according to the historian's words 'was the greatest movement yet known in history'.

If we turn to Chinese history, we find nothing of the kind: the basic structure of Chinese historical works is the direct opposite of the homogeneity and continuity demanded by Hirt for an epic work. I would say that in Chinese works the "Treppenabsatz" is emphasized rather than the "ununterbrochener Fluss", to employ Hirt's terminology. Let us take as an example two chief works of ancient Chinese historiography, which originated only a few centuries later than the above mentioned Greek works: *Tso-chuan* "The Commentary of Master Tso" of the third century B.C. and Szü-ma Ch'ien's *Shih Chi* "Records of the Historian", of the first century B.C.

The former was conceived as a commentary to the chronicle of the small

² Quoted from the English translation, R. Crawley, *Thucydides' Peloponnesian War* (Everyman's Library, London-Toronto 1929), p. 1.

State of Lu supposedly compiled by Confucius. The narrative embodying the history of China from 722 to 481 is divided into sections corresponding to the respective entries of the chronicle of Lu. Naturally, we cannot even speak of a homogeneous stream in a work of this nature. It is said—but I personally do not share this view—that the original work had a more homogeneous character and that it was divided into sections only later to form the commentary to the chronicle of the State of Lu. There is no doubt whatsoever that the second book has been preserved in the form in which it emerged from the author's hands—at least as far as its basic conception and structure are concerned. And this work is even less of a homogeneous nature than the "*Commentary of Master Tso*". The material of the "*Records of the Historian*" is organized in a very intricate system of chapters, constructed according to two divergent points of view to create an impression of a homogeneous stream. Of these viewpoints the most important one, apparently, is the social importance of the material, that is the application of a specific social hierarchy; the most important material—at least in the author's opinion—is placed in the foreground. The next viewpoint is the similar nature of the material; related matters, belonging to the same category, are attached to each other. Only then comes the postulate of chronological succession to arrange matters in chronological order. Thus, the first place is held by the annals of the individual dynasties, *pen-chi* (1) followed by the chronological tables *piao* (2), the treatises *shu* (3) on various economic and cultural matters, such as canals, ceremonies, economy, etc.; then the history of various principalities, the "hereditary families", *shih-chia* (4), and finally the biographies of prominent individuals, *lieh-chuan* (5). This part comprises several histories and descriptions of various foreign peoples as well. This survey in itself shows that the author was aiming at the systematic classification of the material and not the creation of a continuous whole.

The author, on the contrary, tried to emphasize the dividing lines between the individual sections, because a number of the individual chapters not only have independent conclusions in which the author expresses his evaluation of the recorded facts, but independent prefaces as well. The 26th biography, dealing with the "knights of the dagger", *tz'ü-k'o* (6), is an especially characteristic example. The chapter contains the biographies of five men who attempted to assassinate rulers. Each of these biographies is freely linked with the preceding one with the words: 'And in so many and so many years, in this and this place, an event took place...' The entire chapter is then ended with the author's conclusion which presents a general characterization of these personalities.

It is evident that the basic structural method is a loose linking of material with certain common features, a method which could be designated as categorization or systematization, and no attempt was made at achieving internal homogeneity by means of a specific manner of presentation. Homogeneity is