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CIRCUMNAVIGATING THE UNFAMILIAR:
DAO'AN (314–385) AND YAN FU (1852–1921)
ON WESTERN GRAMMAR

Finding a precise term for an unfamiliar phenomenon may only be the second step in the appropriation of new things and new ideas. Rather, describing the phenomenon by means of paraphrases seems to be a more congenial way during the first phase of the integration of new knowledge into an existing taxonomic system. In nineteenth-century China, a huge thesaurus of words coined by missionaries and their collaborators became available for any Chinese interested in “new terms for new ideas”. However, these words were not interesting by themselves until the very moment when the necessity arose to address the facts for which they were meant. In such cases, one would either use a term which had already been coined (not without discussing it, again by means of paraphrases), or coin a new word, or, very frequently, resort to some kind of conceptual periplus, trying to circumnavigate the phenomenon with paraphrases.

Given the fact that traditional China had not developed an autochthonous linguistic vocabulary for the purpose of analyzing grammatical and syntactical phenomena, the description of the special characteristics of foreign languages seems of particular interest. Since the first full-fledged explicit grammar of Chinese appeared only in 1898 (the *Mashi wentong* 馬氏文通 [Mr. Ma's Grammar])¹, one might ask how differences in syntactical structure were described, conceptualized, and finally, put into terms. I am interested in the first step, that is, the phenomenological description. When confronted, let us say, with a totally alien system of communication with almost no reference to our known languages: how would we proceed to put it into words, especially if we were unaware of or would not adhere to Chomskyan or, more generally, universal approaches to grammar?

Reflection about language in traditional China was foremost reflection about the Chinese language, and foreign languages almost never helped to deepen, by means of contrastive juxtaposition, the insights about salient characteristics of the Chinese language. Comparative

¹ Cf. the article by Alain Peyraube in this volume.

linguistics was, to say the least, not one of the strongholds of traditional Chinese scholarship.

Reflection about language in traditional China was furthermore less preoccupied with grammar or syntax, but rather with lexicography, graphology and phonology. Except for a few non-systematic representations, accounts on syntax are completely missing.

The following observations will deal with two remarkable exceptions to this lack of interest in explicit grammar: I shall try to analyze two Chinese statements about the structure of foreign languages, separated from each other by more than 1,500 years. The first is by the Buddhist monk Dao'an 道安 (314–385 AD), the second one by Yan Fu 嚴復 (1852–1921). Both statements share an essentially comparative starting point (Chinese versus 'foreign' languages); furthermore, both deal with syntax, and not with words. The striking similarity between the two statements in terms of their conclusions is perhaps only hypothetical, but I nevertheless think it worthwhile to pay specific attention to the conceptualization of grammar in traditional China. The present article is intended as a mere stimulus to such studies.

1. A CULTURE OF THE IMPLICIT

Before turning to the two protagonists, Dao'an and Yan Fu, and their assessments of comparative syntax, a few remarks about the status of foreign languages and the status of grammar in traditional China might be useful.

In traditional China—and this is one of the rare characteristics that appear to have remained relatively unchanged during the long period from the Han to the late Qing dynasty—learning foreign languages was not part of the elite's *cursus honorum*. Interpreters and translators to whom linguistic mediation was entrusted, were badly paid and not recognized as full-fledged representatives of the intellectual elite. Chinese Buddhism was an exception, but as the number of translators of Chinese origin was extremely low, the enterprise of rendering the Scriptures was mostly entrusted to clerics of foreign origin, who were certainly not accepted as members of any Chinese elite. Since interpreters seem to have belonged to the lower strata of society, bilingualism remained a predominantly oral phenomenon. Even in Qing times, when the official language of the dynasty, the *guoyu* 國語, was Manchu, innumerable literati of the cultural elite failed in the Manchu lan-

guage examinations, which were a prerequisite to becoming a member of the political elite. The only exception was the first phase of the Jesuit mission in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century when both culturally and politically important literati were interested in foreign texts.

If the average literatus was not preoccupied with pondering over foreign languages, he was even less inclined to embark on the study of explicit grammar and syntax. The treatment of grammar was “generally atomistic and ad hoc in nature”²; it rarely went beyond the—rather late—distinction between ‘empty words’ (grammatical particles) and ‘full words’ (charged with full lexical meaning). Some scattered references to something we might interpret as grammatical notions are to be found in the works of Song dynasty thinkers, for instance, the philosopher Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) who spoke about ‘horizontal’ (*heng* 橫) and ‘vertical’ (*shu* 豎) interpretation, or ‘exegesis by parts’ (*fen er yan* 分而言) and ‘exegesis by hierarchy’ (*deng er yan* 等而言), respectively, in both cases alluding to a vague idea of non-subordination or subordination of sentences and clauses in the Chinese Classics.³ Since there was no explicit science of grammar, semantic exegesis and grammatical interpretation often went hand in hand: the famous debate between Zhu Xi and his rival Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–1192) on the correct reading of Master Zhou Dunyi’s 周敦頤 (1017–1073) famous first sentence in the “Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate Explained” (*Taiji tu shuo* 太極圖說) which reads “Without Ultimate and yet Supreme Ultimate” (*wuji er taiji* 無極而太極) revolves more or less around the character *er* 而, which can be rendered, just as its equivalents in modern Chinese, both in an adversative and consecutive way (compare *raner* 然而 ‘but’, ‘yet’; and *erqie* 而且 ‘and also’, ‘moreover’). Had Zhu Xi and Lu Xiangshan practiced grammar as a scientific discipline, much of the dispute could have been resolved by pointing to grammatical terms. However, a Zhu Xi saying “My Dear colleague Lu, I think that Zhou Dunyi had an adversative use of the word *er* in mind, so the precarious Daoist idea of a creation of the world *ex nihilo* conveyed by a consecutive

² Christoph Harbsmeier. 1998. “Language and Logic in Traditional China”, in: Joseph Needham (ed.). *Science and Civilisation in China. Vol. VII. Pt. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 95.

³ Cf. *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (Classified conversations of Master Zhu). 1986. 8 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, p. 1888 and *passim*.

meaning of *er* is to be excluded” is simply inconceivable.⁴ Notwithstanding the absence of explicit grammar, Chinese scholars recognized and practiced syntactical analyses, albeit not in explicit terms. Harbsmeier has shown that Zhu Xi was able to distinguish between the clause and the sentence⁵, but Chinese practice went much farther: diagrams (mostly of stemmatic organization), preserved mainly from Song and Yuan times, show a detailed knowledge of the relationship between main and subordinate clauses; by leaving aside grammatical particles and replacing them by lines or arrows, these representations demonstrate implicit knowledge about their syntactical functions; there are even diagrams which represent syntactic structures identical to what we would now call the relationship between topic and comment.⁶ Thus, knowledge about the grammatical functioning of language was tacitly involved in the practice of interpretation.

Treatment of those elements of language that are considered to be most important in the West is marked in traditional China perhaps by the most implicit nature of all writing cultures in the world: there were, for instance, no words for nouns, verbs, etc., and yet an average poem in regular verse from the Tang dynasty reveals that, from line to line, there is an astonishingly exact matching of noun by noun, verb by verb, and so on. There was poetry, but no technical *ars poetica*. Many of the rhetoric devices known in the West were practiced by Chinese literati, and yet the number of technical terms coined in traditional China is far below what was actually practiced. It took as late as the beginning of the seventeenth century until a usable dictionary of Chinese equipped with a viable method to classify characters was produced (the *Zihui* 字彙 by Mei Yingzuo 梅膺祚 [fl. 1570–1615]), and yet, prior to the seventeenth century, the lack of classification and accessibility in no way obstructed erudition. Neither did the absence of an explicit grammar really obstruct the monumental enterprise of translating the Buddhist Scriptures, nor did it impede the comprehen-

⁴ For this debate cf. Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 . 1980. *Lu Jiuyuan ji* 陸九淵集 (The works of Lu Xiangshan). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

⁵ Cf. Harbsmeier 1998, p. 184.

⁶ Cf. Michael Lackner. 1990. “Zur Verplanung des Denkens am Beispiel der *t'u*”, in: Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer (ed.). *Lebenswelt und Weltanschauung im frühneuzeitlichen China*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, pp. 122–56; and id. 1992. “Argumentation par diagrammes: une architecture à base de mots. Le *Ximing* depuis Zhang Zai jusqu’au *Yanjitu*”, *Extrême-Orient—Extrême-Occident* 14, pp. 131–68.

sion of Western works in the period of the Jesuit mission and during the second half of the nineteenth century.

2. DAO'AN'S REFLECTIONS ON WESTERN SYNTAX

Dao'an was among the first Chinese Buddhist clerics to get a glimpse of the originality and the true meaning of Buddhism⁷, which had, from the time of its introduction into China until the mid-fourth century, always been exposed to the risk of absorption by the indigenous Daoism. The insight that Buddhism was somehow different from the familiar religious and philosophic taxonomies led Dao'an to go beyond the exegetic method of 'matching meanings' (*geyi* 格義) that had explained Indian terms and concepts via Chinese ideas mainly drawn from the *Laozi* 老子, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, and the *Yijing* 易經.

The passage under consideration here is to be found in the third of the three *Prajñāpāramitā* prefaces written by Dao'an. Composed in 382 AD, three years before his death, this preface, the *Mohe boluo ruoboluomijing chaoxu* 摩訶鉢羅若波羅蜜經鈔序 (Preface to an abstract of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra*)⁸, is less concerned with philosophical questions, but rather "sums up a lifetime of experience regarding the difficult problem of accurately rendering the Scriptures into Chinese"⁹. It contains an enumeration of five points, called *shiben* 失本 ('losses to the original', or 'missing the original'), and of three points called *buyi* 不易, an expression which allows for two translations: 'difficulty' as well as 'not deviating from the text', i.e. not changing it. There has been intense scholarly debate about the question of whether this preface contains a set of rules for translation: Zürcher speaks of "some rules stating in what points the translator would be allowed to deviate from the original"¹⁰; in a more precise way, Ōchō tends to distinguish between a set of forbidden transgres-

⁷ Cf. Leon Hurvitz and Arthur E. Link. 1974. "Three Prajnaparamita Prefaces of Tao-an", in: *Mélanges de sinologie offerts à Monsieur Paul Demiéville*, vol. 2. Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, pp. 403–70; 405.

⁸ *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (Taisho Tripitaka). 1960–1978 [1924–1929]. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankokai, 55.52b10–c21. The prefaced translation has not been preserved.

⁹ Hurvitz and Link 1974, p. 425

¹⁰ Cf. Erik Zürcher. 1972 [1959]. *The Buddhist Conquest of China*. Leiden: Brill, p. 203.

sions and another one of inevitable deviations in translation¹¹; Hurvitz and Link think Dao'an merely dealt with necessary and unnecessary 'losses to the original'¹²; Meier interprets the content as "basic principles for translators" ("Leitsätze für die Übersetzer") *par excellence*¹³; Held points to the fact that it took about two hundred years until Dao'an's reflections were understood as "basic principles for translators". Held concludes that Dao'an's remarks only addressed the specific problems connected with the translation of one precise sutra.¹⁴ One may conclude that the truth lies somewhere in between these seemingly contradicting interpretations: if it is true that Chinese word order is different from that of foreign languages, then, this statement holds for all translations; on the other hand, if it is true that about "1,500" words were excised (see below, paragraph four of Dao'an's passage), then, this is only valid for one precise text, because a rule imposing the cutting off of 1,500 words in each text is inconceivable.

Notwithstanding this debate, it remains beyond doubt that Dao'an is one of the first Chinese Buddhist clerics to mention, in a comparative linguistic perspective, the difficulties of translating from a foreign language into Chinese. Let us now examine the passage about the 'five losses':

譯胡為秦，有五失本也：一者，胡語儘倒，而使從秦，一失本也。二者，胡經尚質，秦人好文，傳可眾心，非文不合，斯二失本也。三者，胡經委悉，至于嘆詠，叮嚀反復，或三或四，不嫌其煩，而今裁之，三失本也。四者，胡有義說，正似亂辭，尋說向語，文無以異，或千五百，刈而不存，四失本也。五者，事已全成，將更傍及，反騰前辭，已乃后說而悉除，此五失本也。¹⁵

In translating from foreign languages into Chinese, there are five losses to the original:

1. The foreign words are entirely reversed, and to make them follow the Chinese [word order] is the first loss to the original.
2. The foreign sutras esteem raw material [i.e. plain style], whereas the Chinese are fond of [elegant] style; if the transmission is to fit the feel-

¹¹ Ōchō Einichi 横超惠日. 1958. *Chūgoku bukkyō no kenkyū* 中国仏教の研究 (Studies in Chinese Buddhism). Kyoto, pp. 243–49.

¹² Hurvitz and Link 1974, p. 426.

¹³ Franz-Joseph Meier. 1972. "Probleme der chinesischen Übersetzer des buddhistischen Kanons", *Oriens Extremus* 19, pp. 41–6; 41.

¹⁴ Axel Held. 1980. "Enthält Tao-an's Vorwort in CSTCC 8.1 wirklich 'Leitsätze für die Übersetzer'?", *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens* (NOAG) 1980, pp. 111–19; 114. All translations from Held's German text are mine, M.L.

¹⁵ *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, 55.52b10–c2.

ings of the many [i.e. the Chinese *sangha*], it will have to match [elegant] style. This is the second loss to the original.

3. The foreign sutras are minutely detailed, and regarding their recitative exclamations and repeated exhortations, they do not shy away from reiterating them three or four times. Now, cutting them off is the third loss to the original.

4. In the foreign sutras there are commentaries which elucidate meaning that truly seem like disorderly phrases. Examining these commentaries with regard to the words [of the main text?], one finds that the text shows no difference. Removing about 1,500 [of the words? of the commentaries?] entails the fourth loss to the original.

5. After one subject is completed, it is approached once more from [another] side, and [the authors] jump back to previous sentences [or: take up previous sentences]; and what once was previous, now becomes the new discourse, which has been completely omitted, and that is the fifth loss to the original.

There is not the slightest doubt that in this passage Dao'an deals with differences between Chinese and foreign languages, regardless of the question whether he speaks of only one text or of general principles of translation. The first paragraph is addressing the problem of word order, the second that of style, with an allusion to *Lunyu* 論語 6.16, where Confucius draws a distinction between *zhi* 質 'raw material' or 'plain style', and *wen* 文 'elegant' (interestingly enough, Confucius makes a case for the combination of both qualities). The following three paragraphs are somewhat more difficult to analyze. They seemingly deal with necessary omissions and excisions; in a quantitative sense, they speak about real 'losses': paragraph three, for instance, concerns the abridging of exclamations and exhortations. But what does Dao'an really mean by the concluding two paragraphs? Held interprets paragraph four as a statement of the basic identity between the main text and the commentary; the latter being consequently allowed to be omitted.¹⁶ Hurvitz and Link see "jumbled phrases" and "muddled repetitions of what has already been said."¹⁷ The crucial passage *xun shuo xiang yu, wen wu yi yi* 尋說向語，文無以異 is rendered by Hurvitz and Link:

When, on looking through certain passages, [the Chinese] find that there is nothing to distinguish [such seemingly repetitious explanations from what they deem to be the text proper] ...

¹⁶ Cf. Held 1980, p. 115.

¹⁷ Hurvitz and Link 1974, p. 431.

Compare Held's rendition:

If one examines the words juxtaposed [to the main text as commentaries], the [main] text does not differ in anything from them ...

Apart from the fact that Hurvitz and Link have apparently missed the meaning of *xun shuo xiang yu* 尋說向語, and that Held has not translated the character *shuo* 說, a look at the amount of words in brackets shows that both translations do not cope well with the meaning of the passage.

Finally, there is even more confusion when it comes to the translation and interpretation of the last paragraph. Hurvitz and Link argue that *jiang geng pang* [alternative reading: *beng*] *ji* 將更傍及 means "about to take up the next [topic]". Held renders the passage as I have done above. The passage *fan teng qian ci, yi nai hou shuo* 反騰前辭, 已乃後說 is either translated as "it again copies out [i.e., repeats] the preceding sentences, and only then elucidates [the new subject]..."¹⁸ or as "come back to their previous words [i.e., they repeat the passage they want to take up] and only then continue to speak..."¹⁹. Notwithstanding the question of whether the expression *jiang geng pang* (*beng*) *ji* 將更傍及 points to the text's addressing a new topic or to its taking up an old one, it is clear that the ensuing passage *fan teng qian ci* 反騰前辭 refers to a movement of turning back to what has been said before.

Since we may assume that *ci* 辭, just as the later and more frequent *ju* 句, refers to a sentence (or a clause, the difference was never really made explicit²⁰), the movement of turning back is directed towards a sentence. With regard to an Indo-European language, I can conceive of only two possibilities to explain this movement: either mere repetition, or, generally, the possible position of attributes, for instance, in the form of a subordinate clause, and, more precisely, the relative clause, where, in many cases, the occurrence of a relative pronoun (or the repetition of the noun) modifies the word order to the effect that "what was previously there, now becomes the new discourse" (*yi nai hou shuo* 已乃後說). In a more general way, attributive clauses can, in Indo-European languages, occur after the noun or the sentence they refer to. If we allow for the hypothesis that what Dao'an possibly had

¹⁸ Hurvitz and Link 1974, p. 427.

¹⁹ Cf. Held 1980, p. 115.

²⁰ Cf. Harbsmeier 1998, pp. 182–3.

in mind in paragraph five were phenomena occurring in subordinate clauses, or, more precisely, relative clauses or even, for instance, any use of anaphora; if we consider, furthermore, the position of attributive clauses in ‘foreign’ languages, this will eventually shed some new light on the interpretation of paragraph four: by modifying the translation of the passage *zheng si luan ci, xun shuo xiang yu, wen wu yi yi* 正似亂辭，尋說向語，文無以異， rendered above as “truly seem like disorderly phrases etc.” to “what was previously upright (*zheng* 正), now seems a disorderly phrase; going along these commentaries in the direction of the words, one finds that the text does not differ”, one could again think of a specific kind of elements of sentences or clauses which were to disappear in the process of translation. Since none of the existing translations and interpretations, which are highly controversial, seems to be convincing we should at least take into account the possibility that Dao’an, apart from mentioning the different word order, a particular Chinese style of writing and the general tendency of being more laconic (paragraphs one to three) tried to describe (in paragraphs four and five), by means of paraphrastic ‘circumnavigation’, several syntactical phenomena of a foreign language for which the Chinese had no words. Thus the reference to different word order in paragraph one would rather point to the word order within a sentence, whereas the other remarks, more difficult to understand, would point to the order of clauses or sentences.

3. YAN FU ON WESTERN SYNTAX

The case of Yan Fu is somewhat different from that of Dao’an. With the latter he certainly has in common the deep insight into the radically original and different character of the new knowledge. From the point of view of his translation strategy, however, he is closer to principles that Dao’an’s generation was to overcome, namely, the choice to make the foreign originals more convenient to read for the Chinese public by looking for ‘matching meanings’ with which they were already familiar. As Wang Hongzhi 王宏志, in refuting earlier interpreters such as Lu Xun 魯迅, has rightly pointed out, Yan Fu’s famous device for translation *xin* 信, *da* 達, *ya* 雅 (‘fidelity’, ‘comprehensibility’, and ‘elegance’) must not be divided into three different and, consequently, mutually contradicting parts, but has to be taken as a

whole²¹—a statement which makes Yan Fu's translation practice far less mechanical than some previous critics argued. However, Yan Fu still seems to display a profound distrust with regard to Chinese language's capacity of accommodation, assimilation, and transformation. First of all, he thought that the books he translated were of a definitely higher intellectual quality than all the Western books that had been rendered into Chinese before his time. Such a conviction was of course due to the recent Chinese discovery of the Western philosophical universe, and Yan Fu was among the first Chinese to establish a parallel between the peaks of Western and Chinese intellectual culture; one may, of course, doubt whether *Evolution and Ethics* was at the height of the Chinese Classics, but Montesquieu and John Stuart Mill certainly were. Furthermore, Yan Fu had a problem of status, since he was never really recognized by the class of people he wanted to belong to and to whom he addressed his translations. So the characteristic idiosyncratic style of his translations did not only entail specific modes of choosing terms, it also had far-reaching consequences for the literary style in which foreign works were to be rendered. Consequently enough, this sensitivity for questions of stylistic expression made Yan Fu perhaps more attentive than many of his predecessors and contemporaries for grammatical, and, more precisely, syntactical particularities of foreign languages. The best example known to me is to be found in the introduction to his translation of *Evolution and Ethics*, where, after having exposed his three principles of translation *xin, da, ya*, he continues:

西文句中名物字，多隨舉隨釋，如中文之旁支，后乃遙接前文，足意成句。故西文句法，少者二三字，多者數十百言。假令仿此為譯，則恐必不可通，而刪削取徑，又恐意義有漏。此在譯者將全文神理，融會于心，則下筆抒詞，自善互備。至原文詞理本深，難于共喻，則當前後引襯，以顯其意。凡此經營，皆以為達；為達，即所以為信也。

Words for names of things [i.e. nouns] in Western sentences are frequently taken up, or elucidated—just as is the case for Chinese commentaries—by connecting later parts from afar to the previous text, and only when the signification is completed, the sentence will be accom-

²¹ Wang Hongzhi 王宏志 . 1999. *Chongshi xin-da-ya. Ershi shiji Zhongguo fanyi yanjiu* 重釋信达雅·二十世紀中國翻譯研究 (Reinterpreting 'fidelity, comprehensibility, and elegance'. Studies on translation in twentieth-century China). Shanghai: Dongfang chubanshe, p. 87. Wang argues that Yan Fu thought of a translation process in three phases, so that 'fidelity' becomes the precondition for 'comprehensibility' which, in turn, is the prerequisite of 'elegance'. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 84.

plished. In Western syntax, such sentences may contain from a minimum of two or three words up to a maximum of several dozen. If one wants to imitate this [structure] in translation, I am afraid no one will understand it, but if, on the other hand, one abridges and makes excisions, I am equally afraid there will be lacunae as to the meaning. Coping with this problem is entirely up to the translator's ability to pervade the entire text with his mind, to amalgamate it intellectually, so that he will find appropriate words which correspond to it perfectly. As far as the deep implications of words are concerned where sometimes it is difficult to find a common image, one has tied together what precedes and what follows in order to display the true meaning. By proceeding in this way, everything becomes comprehensible; comprehensibility is that by which it becomes elegant.²²

Looking at the first part of this statement, we find that Yan Fu's presentation of a syntactic phenomenon proceeds in two ways: first, he compares it with an existing, familiar case—the Chinese commentary. Secondly, he alludes to a translation process where parts of the sentence, which come—to his apparent astonishment—after the nouns, have to be related to these nouns. This task can only be performed, he continues, by contemplating the entire text, by an amalgamation of the whole.

In this passage, Yan Fu, who had some knowledge of the Buddhist translations of Dao'an's period, especially those by Kumarajiva²³, makes a statement about syntactic order in Indo-European languages in a much more precise way than Dao'an. Attributive clauses in relationship to nouns can (but of course need not) occur after the nouns; something that is quite impossible in Chinese—with one exception: the commentary. I admit that the Chinese commentary cannot be fully compared with the mostly hypotactically organized Western subordinate clause, since the overall functioning mode of Chinese is a paratactic one. However, the position of a commentary (placed after the noun or the topic), and its function (attributive, or, more generally speaking, expletive) do come close to its Western counterparts, the subordinate and/or attributive clause. According to Yan Fu, Western syntactic order cannot be entirely "imitated", i.e., preserved. In the words of Dao'an, this is an inevitable "loss to the original". It is fur-

²² Yan Fu. 1986. *Yan Fu ji* 嚴復集 (The works of Yan Fu). Edited by Wang Shi 王弼. 5 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, p. 1321.

²³ Wang Kefei 王克非. 1997. *Fanyi wenhua shilun* 翻譯文化史論 (On the cultural history of translation). Shanghai: Waiyu jiaoyu chubanshe, p. 122.

thermore interesting to note that with the idea of Chinese commentaries in mind, Yan Fu permitted himself all sorts of explanatory additions which were not to be found in the original text. Moreover, a semantic relationship between Dao'an's expression *pang (beng) ji* 傍及 (which I have rendered as "approaching [the subject] once more from [another] side") and Yan Fu's wording *pangzhi* 旁支 for 'commentary' is not entirely unlikely.

Harbsmeier, in his monumental work on language and logic, has rightly pointed out what he calls the "epitomizing scribal mode"²⁴ of ancient China displayed a certain reticence towards the idea of writing being concurrent with thought (as, for instance, is the case with Latin and Greek parenthetical style, indirect speech, etc.); however, commentary often goes beyond merely summarizing thought and speech, albeit in a way that could be qualified as postmodern: it is often not the author himself who makes these additions, and thus the text never has a real end.

Once again, this procedure has not found a proper terminology, similar to the case of the grammatical analyses contained in the diagrams from the Song and Yuan: rather, it is a practice and, again, this practice is characterized by a high degree of visuality. Commentaries can frequently be distinguished from the original texts by their different size of characters and some other visible particularities. Thus, what can be shown and seen replaces much of what could be said.

Consequently, Yan Fu, in his discourse on syntactic differences, looked for the only comparable phenomenon familiar to Chinese readers. The fact that he went beyond a simple comparison is certainly due to the basic syntactic difference between hypotactic and paratactic modes of languages. This difference cannot be understood by saying that "Yan Fu translated the long sentences of the English by the short sentences of the Chinese", as Wang Kefei 王克非 explains in his remarks on the translation style of Yan Fu, or that it was only by his additional commentaries (referring to persons, names of places, in brief, cultural knowledge) that Yan Fu, in his own words, "tied together what precedes and what follows in order to display the true meaning".²⁵ Otherwise, Yan Fu would not have indicated the directions 'before', and 'after', respectively. Even the more precise

²⁴ Harbsmeier 1998, pp. 415–8.

²⁵ Wang Kefei 1997, pp. 121, 122–3.

description by Wang Li, cited in Wang Kefei, does not really come to the point:

Westerners, in writing, treat language by making a whole of individual fragments (*hua ling wei zheng* 化零為整), while one is almost allowed to say that the Chinese make individual fragments of a whole (*hua zheng wei ling* 化整為零).²⁶

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The detailed study of the cognitive process by which grammatical and syntactical particularities of foreign languages were seized in traditional China has hitherto been neglected in favour of the admittedly much more rewarding analysis of lexicography. However, it seems that we can learn a lot about the integration of new knowledge, even about the process that finally leads to a new term, by examining how, in a first step, a phenomenological approach was applied to grasp things unfamiliar. First of all, we can see that terms for relative clauses, subordinate clauses, attributive sentences/clauses and the like were not indispensable for the successful translation of a text containing these grammatical phenomena. The Buddhist translators could do without, and even Yan Fu with his highly idiosyncratic approach to rendition that presupposed a most elaborated sense for syntactic transformation apparently felt no need to recur to terms which, in the eyes of modern translation practice, would seem inevitable for the understanding of any foreign language. The intrinsic ability of cultures to translate and to be translated does not predominantly depend on terms. However, things begin to change as soon as questions of domination become involved: in education and in institutions, social and political, the wholesale adoption of a new and different system of the organization of knowledge, as prepared in late nineteenth-century China, will no doubt largely depend on taxonomies made up of inter-related concepts and terms. On the other hand, a premature and precipitate adoption of new terms often entails a reverse effect: ready-made words, especially if put into the wrong taxonomic drawers, can spare reflection on the nature of certain phenomena or, even worse, may become an obstacle to creativity.

²⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 121.

