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## **Editorial**

*Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, the journal of the Department of Asian and North African Studies of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, was started back in 1970 and is to date one of the oldest journals of its kind in Italy. Its mission is to foster original and interdisciplinary research in the fields of Asian and North African Studies and its manifold linguistic areas, from Arabic to Japanese.

Each annual issue features articles and reviews written by leading scholars whose contributions span across a vast array of topics. These can be gathered under four main headings: 1. Linguistics, philology and literature; 2. Religions and philosophies; 3. Archaeology and cultural heritage, visual and performing arts; 4. History, economy, politics and international relations.

As always, each proposed article is evaluated by qualified scholars of international renown through double-blind peer review. By utilizing a web-based secure IT platform, the referee tools employed in the process correspond to the ones current amongst the most authoritative scientific journals.

After three years of forced interruption (2011-13) due to the fusion of the two Departments of Euro-Asiatic Studies and Eastern Asia into our present Department, the journal has evolved into electronic format, being digitally edited by Edizioni Ca' Foscari. Moreover, from 2014 *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale* has become an Open Access resource.

But in order to look forward towards a bright future it is mandatory to cultivate the memory of the past and to appreciate what was achieved by the prior generations of scholars who contributed to the journal. In this spirit, several years ago the project of digitalization of the entire 1970-2010 collection, comprising a total of more than 40 volumes and 600 articles, was patiently undertaken.

In 2015, thanks to the painstaking work of librarian Dr. Maria Loretta Manzato and her staff of the Linguistic Library of Ca' Foscari University, the digitalization process was finally brought to completion.

An index of all articles, divided by subject areas with titles, keywords and link to their full text, is now available at the following digital archive: <http://lear.unive.it/jspui/handle/11707/1302>. All texts can be easily searched for, retrieved and downloaded and we warmly invite scholars and students alike to visit our archive of *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale* and make the best use of it.



# Silence and Speech Etiquette

## A Contribution to the Study of Islamic Ethics

Ida Zilio-Grandi  
(Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia)

**Abstract** When speaking of silence, the Koran employs three different verbal roots (ṣ-m-t, s-k-t, n-ṣ-t); on the basis of this linguistic profusion, Arabic Islamic culture has elaborated a complex conception of silence, which embraces an element of abstention, linking it to passivity and stillness, and a cognitive element, linking it to listening and learning. The exegetical corpus and above all the moral literature, represented here chiefly by the learned Sunnite Ibn Abī al-Dunyā of Baghdad (d. 281/894)'s *Kitāb al-ṣamt wa ādāb al-lisān*, equate silence with verbal discipline and award it the status of an Islamic value, to the extent that it is posited as an optimal attitude in the believer's relation with God and with other members of the Islamic community.

**Summary** 1 Premise. – 2 Silence in the Koran and the Exegetical Literature. – 3 Silence in the Ethical-religious Literature of the Classical Period. – 4 *Silence and Good Manners in Speech* by Ibn Abī Al-dunyā. – 5 *The Government of the Tongue and the Excellence of Silence*. – 6 Conclusions.

**Keywords** Koran. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā. Silence.

### 1 Premise

In an earlier study (Zilio-Grandi 2015) I came across silence as a constituent element of the virtue known as *ḥilm* or 'judiciousness', that is as a virtuous trait in the believer, and an Islamic ethical value.<sup>1</sup> This was in such aphorisms as «silence (*sukūt*) is itself a reply», or «He who shows compassion is forgiven and he who remains silent (*yaṣmutu*, cf. *ṣamt*) will be safe and sound», and in such verses of poetry as «When the fool speaks do not answer him | silence (again *sukūt*) is better than a reply», found in that most fertile of authors in the field of homiletic literature, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā of Baghdad (d. 281/894), traditionist, jurist and tutor to the Abbasid caliphs al-Mu'taḍid and al-Muḩtafi, specifically in a pamphlet precisely on the subject of judiciousness (ʿAṭā 1993).

But silence's inclusion among the tenets of Islamic ethics is by no means a given, granted that the culture in question is in general more inclined to

1 On silence as a *ḥilm* element, see also Pellat 2012.



verbosity than silence,<sup>2</sup> all the way back to its own cornerstone, the Koran, which in effect announces itself as the most eloquent of human speech, able to convey with precision the divine Word. And the subsequent classical Arabic literary corpus continues to evince an unshakeable faith in speech, attributing to it a solid operational, and even a degree of salvific potency.<sup>3</sup> The same goes for juridical doctrine; we may remember for example the harsh censure of silence when it is a question of 'commanding right and forbidding wrong', and the 'dumb devil' (*šayṭān aḥras*), the personification of a servile code of silence, a familiar figure from traditional imagery.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Silence in the Koran and the Exegetical Literature

Alongside its respect for the word, we find a corresponding low valuation of silence in the Koran. One has only to remember the vicissitudes of the prophet Zechariah, who was silent for three days, possibly as a punishment, after having doubted divine manifestations (*Koran*, 3,41 and 19,10),<sup>5</sup> and from another angle one could cite Mary the future mother of Jesus (19,26); or Abraham in the episode where silence is a symptom and prerogative of false gods (21,63-65 and 37,92); or again, the silence of the damned in the hereafter (23,109).<sup>6</sup> In these cases the Koran does not refer to silence with a direct epithet, but by litotes, that is negating speech.

2 A point made by, among others, the contemporary Syrian intellectual Muḥammad Rātib al-Nābūlusī (2003).

3 «Which the example best known in the West, that of Šahrazād, demonstrates with particular clarity», as Ghersetti (2010, p. 46) puts it.

4 From a late saying of the Prophet's. The idea is picked up by for example Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya (d. 751/1350; Ibrāhīm 1411/1991, vol. 2, p. 121), who writes: «How much faith and how much good can reside in one who can see the precepts of God violated [...] with a cold heart and a silent tongue? Such a one is a mute devil. Similarly one who utters falsity is a talking devil (*šayṭān nāṭiq*)».

5 Some exegetes read Zechariah's silence straight forwardly as a punishment. Cf. Ayoub 1992, pp. 115-122 and Marshall 2016. On the silence of Zechariah and of Mary see also below.

6 More precisely a seal placed by God on their mouths (cf. *naḥtimu 'alā afwāmi-him*) in *Koran*, 36,65. Further examples of the negativity of silence might be added, which, even if not wholly explicit in the Koran, are none the less relevant to our exegesis: the silence endured by the Companions of the Cave (*Koran* 18,11), Moses's inability to remain silent as demanded by his instructor (*Koran* 18,67-82), the silence of the Revelation - and consequently that of the Prophet - when he failed to add *in šā' Allāh* to his declaration of his intentions for the future (cf. *Koran*, 8,23-24). In so far as this paper is concerned with the moral dimension of silence, it will omit some important but not strictly pertinent aspects such as the pause (*waqf*) in Koranic readings, or the 'silent' or implicit (*'al-mafhūm'*) element in the Word, as opposed to that explicitly pronounced (*'al-manṭūq'*).

Furthermore the borderline between silence from choice and muteness<sup>7</sup> as an involuntary, perhaps pathological state, is often unclear and a matter of debate between the commentators. Thus, in order to conduct an investigation into silence in the Koran and in Arabic and Islamic culture more generally, it will be more convenient to argue from the lexicography and concentrate our attention on the Arabic words used to describe the act of remaining silent.

In this connection, the classical vocabulary employs mainly *sukūt* e *ṣamt* (with the cognate *ṣumūt*), which seem to be lexicographically synonymous.<sup>8</sup> While not present themselves in the Koran, we do find their verbal roots: both recurring in the space of a couple of dozen verses in *sūrat al-A'rāf* (The Heights).

The root ṣ-m-t - 'to be silent, to be speechless; to be rugged' (DQU, s.v.) - appears in the context of the obstinacy of the unbelievers, deaf to the divine word: «And if ye call them to the Guidance. They follow you not. Whether ye call them or are silent (*ṣāmitūn*) is all one to them» (*Koran*, 7,193).<sup>9</sup> The sense is clear<sup>10</sup> and the commentators have little or nothing to add.

As to the root s-k-t - 'being silent, becoming silent, to stop talking, to stop moving; to abate' (DQU, s.v.) - this is used with reference to Moses, after the episode of the Golden Calf: «Then, when the anger of Moses abated (*sakata*), he took up the tables, and in their inscription there was guidance and mercy for all those who fear their Lord» (*Koran*, 7,154). In this case the exegesis is more copious. Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) (1412/1992, vol. 9, p. 49),

7 Which the Book treats entirely negatively. The root chiefly employed to express it is b-k-m, «dumbness, muteness; inability to express oneself; to be silent; to be born or to become dumb or mute; to be ignorant». From which *abkam*, «dumb, mute, ignorant, incapable of self-expression», which according to the *Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (henceforth DQU, available online at <http://brillonline.nl/browse/dictionary-of-quranic-usage> [2016-05-12]) appears on only one occasion (*Koran*, 16,76) and the plural *bukm*, which appears five times. By contrast, the near synonymous root *aḥras* (see Lane 1968, vol. 4, p. 722) does not appear at all.

8 For Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1312-3) in his *Lisān al-'Arab* (henceforth LA), the verbs *ṣamata* and *sakata* have the same meaning (2003, vol. 8, pp. 278-279, s.v. ṣ-m-t and vol. 7, pp. 214-215, s.v. s-k-t); for other lexicographers, the first refers only to one who does not speak for pathological reasons, while *sakata* can also refer to someone who remains silent while capable of speech (see al-Zabīdī, d. 1205/1791, *Tāǧ al-'Arūs*, 1407-1987, vol. 16, pp. 590-596, s.v. ṣ-m-t and vol. 16, pp. 558-563 s.v. s-k-t) and cf. Lane 1968, vol. 4, p. 1389 [s.v. s-k-t] and p. 1725 [s.v. ṣ-m-t]). Here and subsequently regarding lexicography cf. also <http://www.baheth.info/> (2016-05-12).

9 Here and hereafter all translations from the Koran are from Pickthall's rendering (1930).

10 As confirmed by Noah's words in *Koran*, 71,7: «Whenever I call unto them that Thou mayest pardon them they thrust their fingers in their ears and cover themselves with their garments». Cf. also *Koran*, 2,6. Here and subsequently regarding koranic exegesis cf. also the site of the The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (Jordan), <http://www.altafsir.com> (2016-05-12).

voicing the standard interpretation, explains that the primary meaning of the term *sakata* is 'hold back', 'abstain' or 'desist' (*kaffa*), applicable to anyone ceasing to do something, including those who keep silent, in so far as they abstain from speech or have finished speaking. However – he goes on – this last explanation will not serve for the passage in question, where the Koran means to say that Moses's anger abates. A similar reading is proposed by, among others, Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209): it makes no sense – he observes (1415/1995, vol. 5, pp. 374-375) – to think of silence (*ṣamt*) here, because this would entail keeping the mouth closed (cf. *sadda fā-hu* 'an *al-kalām*), presumed to be incompatible with anger; therefore *sakata* here should be read as a synonym for *sakana*, 'calmed down', and consequently we are not dealing with the prophet or his anger<sup>11</sup> falling silent (*sukūt*), but with calmness, with equanimity regained on the dissolution (*zawāl*) of the preceding psychological state.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, in neither of these two cases, *ṣamata* and *sakata*, does the Koran attribute any ethical import to silence, as a 'character' (*ḥuluq*) of the good believer; the commentators accept this and refrain from trying to go beyond the apparent meaning.

There is however another verbal root pertinent to our argument, that is *n-ṣ-t*, which expresses particularly the silence required for listening to another's discourse.<sup>13</sup> This too we find in the Koran,<sup>14</sup> with two instances of the imperative plural *anṣitū*.

In the first – which is curiously also to be found in *sūrat al-A'rāf* – the appreciation of silence as an essential element in praiseworthy conduct is incontestable, although strictly confined to listening to the Word of God: «And when the Qur'ān is recited, give ear to it (*istami'ū la-hu*) and pay heed to it (*anṣitū*) that ye may obtain mercy» (*Koran*, 7, 204). Here is al-Ṭabarī's paraphrase:

Lend your ears to it [the Koran] (*iṣḡū la-hu sam'a-kum*) so that you thoroughly take in (*li-tatafahhamū*) each verse, and absorb (*ta'tabirū*) its lessons; remain silent (*anṣitū*) before it so as to understand it and

11 Which being the case it is personalized by the recourse to metaphor or *isti'āra*; among the authors treating of this, al-Zamaḥṣarī (d. 538/1144) and Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī; contemporarily, Ṭaṇṭawī (d. 1431/2010), all on *Koran*, 7, 154. See <http://www.altafsisir.com/Tafasir.asp> (2016-05-12).

12 This is also the view of al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272), Ibn Kaṭīr (d. 774/1373) and, among others, the 'two Ḡalāl', al-Maḥallī (d. 864/1459) and al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), always on *Koran*, 7, 154.

13 Cf. Lane 1968, vol. 8, p. 2801 and, among others, LA (Ibn Maṅzūr 2003, vol. 14, 278-279, s.v. *n-ṣ-t*).

14 Cf. DQU, s.v.: «To listen, to lend an ear to, to accept advice; to be silent, to silence». I note in passing that DQU also refers to silence in relation to the roots *h-m-d* and *m-w-t*, not of strict relevance in the context of this essay.

ponder it (*ta'qilū-hu wa-tatadabbarū-hu*), and do not chatter away over the top of it (*lā talgū fī-hi*) and fail to comprehend its meaning (*fa-lā ta'qilū-hu*). (1412/1992, vol. 9, p. 110)

An interesting recasting, which with its references to understanding (*tafahhum*), absorbing (*i'tibār*), pondering (*tadabbur*) and the intellect (*'aql*), makes the verse under analysis an appeal to cultural discernment as much as to silence; and conversely frames speech as an intrusive element. Al-Ṭabarī explains that this silence/listening refers to the Koranic passages recited by the Imam during the canonical prayer (*al-ṣalāt al-maktūba, al-mafrūda*) and backs up his case with various anecdotes on the *sabab al-nuzūl* of that verse, that is the circumstances that explain its revelation: this passage was revealed because during prayers there were some who talked about their own affairs, greeted acquaintances, got stirred up and noisy at the mere mention of paradise or hell, or arriving late asked others at what point they were and how far there was to go to the end. Returning to the theme, al-Ṭabarī (p. 111) offers an alternative explanation: the obligation of silence refers to the sermon or *ḥuṭba* that accompanies Friday's prayers and other mandatory feast days.<sup>15</sup> Our illustrious commentator maintains in fact that both interpretations are correct, and adopts them himself. By way of confirmation, he (p. 112) quotes a saying of Muḥammad's - «When the imam speaks, remain silent»<sup>16</sup> - and various other authorities, for example the following, attributed to the 'Follower' Muḡāhid ibn Ġabr (d. 104/722 ca) and to the highly regarded Mecca jurist 'Aṭā' (d. 114/732 ca): «Silence (*al-ṣumūt*) is obligatory on two occasions, when a man recites the Koran while praying (*wa huwa yuṣallī*), and when the imam does so while preaching (*wa huwa yaḥṭubu*)».

A few centuries later, Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1415/1995, vol. 5, p. 439) reiterates the composite meaning of the root n-ṣ-t - «*inṣāt* means at the same time listening (*istimā'*) and remaining silent (*sukūt*)» - and thus in his turn puts the emphasis on the divine will: he explains that the imperative *anṣitū* voices a clearly expressed duty (*wuḡūb*), the exact extension of which remains to be defined: has this prohibition of speech (*taḥrīm al-kalām*) absolute application and does it cover every occasion when the Koran is

15 Diametrically opposite views - «whoever says "be quiet" on Fridays while the imam is preaching, is talking nonsense (*laḡā*)» - are recorded by for example al-Tirmidī (d. 279/892) and Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), cf. Wensinck, Mensing 1967, vol. 6, p. 457, s.v. n-ṣ-t.

16 This saying in a more extended version - «the imam is there so that his example be followed, and when he says "Allah<sup>v</sup> akbar", you should repeat it, and when he recites the Koran, be silent» (*fa-iḡā kabbara fa-kabbirū wa iḡā qara'a fa-anṣitū'*) - is reported by, among others, ibn Māḡa (d. 273/887), *Sunan, kitāb iqāmat al-ṣalāt* [...], no. 838 (from Abū Mūsā al-Aṣ'arī); and by al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915), *Sunan, kitāb al-masāḡid*, no. 981 (from Abū Hurayra). Here and hereafter, for references to the Tradition cf. <http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/hadithsearch.php> (2016-05-12).

recited, always and regardless, as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and other literalists maintain? If this be the case – al-Rāzī (p. 440) observes – then it would be necessary to stay silent when anyone passing by happened to be reciting the Koran, or when a teacher was instructing his pupils. But there are some – he continues – who following Abū Hurayra (d. 58/678 ca) believe that the prohibition only applies to the *ṣalāt*; and others again after Sa'īd ibn Ğubayr (d. 95/712 ca) and 'Aṭā', believe it to be limited to the *ḥuṭba*. Al-Rāzī himself follows yet a third view, from 'the father of Koranic exegesis' Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687 ca): that God in this verse meant only to discourage the habit of repeating aloud the words of whoever is conducting the prayers, overlapping with him and creating confusion, as in fact the Prophet's Companions wanted to do.

The second instance of the root n-ṣ-t occurs in the *sūrat al-Aḥqāf* (The Sandhills):

And when We inclined toward thee [Muḥammad] certain of the Jinn, who wished to hear the Qur'ān and, when they were in its presence, said: – Give ear! (*Koran*, 46, 29)

Here on the whole the commentators indulge in digressions of a narrative nature; they imagine their readers' questions and respond according to the Tradition, almost always leaning on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>17</sup> When they home in on the exhortation to remain silent/listen, some even translate it with a prosaic «shhh!», some read it as quietness (*sukūn*), that is an abstention (*sukūt*) from the jinns' usual whispering and innuendo;<sup>18</sup> finally there are those who pick up on a note by the very early Qatāda ibn Di'āma (d. 117/735 ca), who refers to the intellectual element implied by the root n-ṣ-t: the group of jinns were aware ('*alima*) that they would not have understood much (*lan ya'qilū*) unless they kept quiet and listened.<sup>19</sup>

To recap, thanks to its recourse to three different verbal roots, the Koran is able to formulate a complex conception of silence; and this complexity

17 Asking for example: Where was the Prophet for this recital, and where exactly were the jinns? By a palm tree. And how many of them were there? Fewer than ten (cf. the use of *naḥar*), possibly nine. Where did they come from? From the heavens, having been pelted by falling stars (cf. *Koran*, 15,18). Were they invisible? And if so how was Muḥammad aware of their presence? Thanks to divine inspiration. What did the jinns do having left that place? Perhaps, on the instructions of Muḥammad, they became prophets to their own kind and preached Islam, etc. (cf. in particular al-Ṭabarī's commentary).

18 As does the commentary attributed to '*al-ṣayḥ al-akbar*' Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) (1422/2001, vol. 2, p. 223).

19 According to al-Ṭabarī himself (1412/1992, vol. 26, pp. 19-20). And here is a paraphrase proposed by the modern commentator al-Ālūsī ('Aṭīyya 1415/1994, vol. 13, p. 187) (d. 1270/1854): «Be quiet that we may listen to [the Koran], for there is education (*ta'addub*) in it which will lead us to knowledge ('*ilm*)».

is taken up and emphasised by the main lines of exegesis: a distinction is drawn between silence of the type *ṣamt* (or *ṣumūt*), indicative of a generic absence of communication; a silence of the *sukūt* type, possibly abstract or metaphorical, which has more the sense of abstention, interruption or renunciation, and connects to quietness and tranquillity. And finally a remaining silent-listening conveyed by the derivatives of the root n-ṣ-t, which has an epistemological compass, and connects with knowledge and intelligence, particularly in matters of faith.

As we shall see, these different interpretive strands come together in subsequent thought on silence; principally favoured will be, on the one hand, the idea that staying silent is a renunciation of potential evil and therefore a road to salvation, and on the other, the conviction that silence coincides with listening and therefore with learning. On closer inspection, both ideas function very well as approaches to the prophetic and more generally ecstatic experience, on which after all Islamic culture rests. For example we can review from such a point of view the Koranic representations of Zechariah and Mary, and their parallel muteness in anticipation of the birth of the prophets John the Baptist and Jesus.<sup>20</sup> Or, advancing chronologically in the religious literature, the accounts of Muḥammad at the cave on Ḥirā', where, thanks to the intervention of the angel Gabriel, he breaks silence in a unique illuminative and redeeming experience. Or again, continuing onwards, we might think of the silence of the mystics on their path to the divine Reality. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) – to cite a single representative example – maintains in his *Qūt al-qulūb* or *The Nourishment of Hearts*, little short of a manual of Sufism, that silence (*ṣamt*) is one of the four buttresses (*asās*) of the postulant,<sup>21</sup> that it is an ornament to the wise (*zayn li-l-'ālim*) but shameful in the ignorant (*ṣayn li-l-ḡāhil*), and on its own suffices to make up half of 'science' (*'ilm*), the other half being to know when to employ it.<sup>22</sup>

20 On this point, and on the relationship between silence and fasting, see Zilio-Grandi 1997, especially pp. 63-66.

21 The remaining three are fasting, keeping a vigil and seclusion. Cf. al-Makkī (al-Kayyālī 2005, vol. 1, pp. 169-177 and above all p. 169).

22 Al-Makkī (al-Kayyālī 2005, p. 172). On the importance of silence to the mystical experience in general, see Baldini's thorough synthesis (Baldini 2005, chiefly pp. 86-87 and 164-173).

### 3 Silence in the Ethical-religious Literature of the Classical Period

As a sort of halfway house between '*belles lettres*' or *adab* and the religious literature which Islamic thought is pleased to call 'science' or '*ilm*', there exists a genre of Arabic learned writing usually defined – this too indicating its intermediate nature – as 'religious *adab*'.<sup>23</sup> To this category belong a number of works on silence that present the reader with certain exemplary models from history, beginning, needless to say, with the Prophet himself and his *Sunna*. To be more precise, these works are not dedicated exclusively to silence but more widely to 'disciplined speaking', and indeed, relative to the recommended forms of speech, silence properly understood occupies a relatively negligible area.

Although the theme treated comes well within the ambit of 'advice literature', which does not hesitate to recommend reticence and prudence<sup>24</sup> to the courtier,<sup>25</sup> the rigorously traditionistic internal structure and the general tone inevitably tend to place these texts within a religious and foundational framework. Their objective in fact is not optimum relations between subaltern and current ruler but that peaceful co-existence of equals<sup>26</sup> which the believer owes by way of tribute to his Creator in anticipation of the life hereafter; thus the many taciturn or silent ones evoked in the pages of these texts are quiet as part and parcel of a religious adherence to the right and the good, and only secondarily for motives of social harmony.

Throughout the classical period we find examples of such writings on silence, by no means abundant but of particular theoretical and practical interest, distributed through fat compendia of *moralia*, only rarely in monographic

23 Cf. Azarnoosh, Umar 2008. Among the more typical titles of the genre, apart from many by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, we can cite: *Al-adab al-mufrad* by al-Buḥārī (d. 256/870), *Ādāb al-nufūs* by al-Hārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), *Al-amthāl wa al-ḥikam* by al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), *al-Ādāb* by al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066). Also on the same theme, as the title indicates, *al-Adab fī al-dīn* by Abū Ḥāmid al-Gazālī (d. 505/1111). Interesting for its particular take, *Adab al-nisā'* (also known as *al-Ghāya wa al-nihāya*) by 'Abd al-Malik ibn Ḥabīb al-Andalusī (d. 238/853), and *'Ishrat al-nisā'* by Aḥmad al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915).

24 Azarnoosh (2008) writes: «[Ibn Abī al-Dunyā] dedicated a work, *al-Ṣamt wa ādāb al-lisān*, [...] to two fundamental issues of *adab*: reticence at the right times and refraining from vain talk».

25 On the attribution of these works to a sub-genre '*Wesierspiegel*' or 'Mirror of the Viziers', see Ghersetti 2010, p. 48 and Bauden, Ghersetti 2007, chiefly pp. 295-296.

26 Contrastingly, in the world of '*belles lettres*', silence is a reflection of disharmony between factions, of an imbalance in power terms (Ghersetti 2010, p. 48); it emanates from the courtier towards his prince, from the inferior party, that is, to the greater. For historical examples in the opposite direction, from the greater to the lesser, and in particular on the silence of the Ottomans towards their inferiors, including foreign ambassadors, see Özkan, Speelman 2010 and Pedani 2010.

form. Among the more typical – in chronological order – we might note firstly the *Kitāb al-ṣamt* or *The Book of Silence* by the Egyptian Koranic commentator ‘Abd Allāh ibn Wahb al-Quraṣī (d. 197/812), probably the text that pinpoints the isolation of the theme of silence from the broad context of the prophetic Tradition.<sup>27</sup> The best known and most extensive work in the genre is *Silence and Good Manners in Speech (Kitāb al-ṣamt wa ādāb al-lisān)*<sup>28</sup> from the above-quoted Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, to which we will return. Another notable example would be the chapter entitled *Holding One’s Tongue and Banishing the Man and the Utterance That Are Out of Place (Bāb ḥifẓ al-lisān wa tark al-mar’ wa al-kalām fī-mā lā ya’nī-hi)*, in the *Makārim al-aḥlāq* by the renowned Palestinian religious-ethical writer al-Ḥarā’iṭī (d. 327/939-40).<sup>29</sup> Briefer but no less interesting is the chapter *Holding One’s Tongue and Paying Attention to One’s Words (Faṣl fī ḥifẓ al-lisān wa tawaqqī al-kalām)* in the Hanbalite jurist Ibn Mufliḥ al-Dimaṣqī (d. 763/1361)’s, *Al-ādāb al-ṣar’iyya*.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, Ġalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505)’s<sup>31</sup> *The Right Path in Silence (Ḥusn al-samt fī al-ṣamt)*, one of the many instances where the Egyptian polymath reframes for his contemporaries a theme previously explored by other writers; in his opening lines al-Suyūṭī announces that he is summarising the work of Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, but also refers to other authors, both ancient, like Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), al-Dārimī (d. 255/869) and al-Tirmidī (d. 279/892), or such later ones as al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) and Abū Nu‘aym al-Isbahānī (d. 430/1038).

In closing, a general linguistic note: the derivatives of the root n-ṣ-t are almost entirely absent from this literature – an indication that the original rich Koranic lexicon had been lost<sup>32</sup> – but not its contents, which we find absorbed into *ṣamt* and *sukūt* and derivatives of their roots, all apparently deployed synonymously.

27 Cf. David-Weill (2012). This work is nevertheless included in Abū al-Ḥayr (1995, pp. 405-521, nos. 294-413); it is followed by *Bāb fī al-‘uzla*, on an analogous theme (pp. 523-657, nos. 414-561). On Ibn Wahb see also the works of Muranyi, particularly ‘*Abd Allāh b. Wahb. Leben und Werk. Al-Muwaṭṭa’* (1992).

28 Consulted in the critical edition prepared by Abū Ishāq al-Ḥuwaynī (1989), also to be found at <http://islampost.com/w/don/Web/3258/1.htm> (2016-05-12).

29 The work has been edited by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Baġġāš Ṭābit al-Ḥimyarī (2006, vol. 1, pp. 773-858, nos. 480-527).

30 Edited by Ṣu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūt and ‘Umar al-Qayyān (1977, vol. 1, pp. 34-43. Available online at [http://library.islamweb.net/newlibrary/display\\_book.php?bk\\_no=43&ID=8&idfrom=16&idto=18&bookid=43&startno=0](http://library.islamweb.net/newlibrary/display_book.php?bk_no=43&ID=8&idfrom=16&idto=18&bookid=43&startno=0) [2016-05-12]).

31 Edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad Sulaymān Disūq (2010, pp. 61-119, available online at <http://ia600400.us.archive.org/0/items/hsfss/hsfss.pdf> [2016-05-12]). This edition also boasts a brief study of Ibn Abī al-Dunyā and his principal works, pp. 36-43).

32 They also make few appearances in the Sunnite ‘canonical’ compilations; cf. also Wensinck, Mensing (1967, vol. 6, pp. 457-458, s.v. n-ṣ-t). In modern Arabic the root expresses for the most part listening alone, cf. Wehr 1979, p. 1137.



#### 4 *Silence and Good Manners in Speech by Ibn Abī Al-dunyā*

Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's work, which occupies pride of place in the genre, is subdivided into 25 sections or *abwāb*, with a miscellany to close; the section titles are a sufficiently clear indication of their contents:

- 1) The government of the tongue and the excellence of silence;<sup>33</sup> 2) It is forbidden to speak indiscreetly and plunge into falsity;<sup>34</sup> 3) It is forbidden to speak of what does not concern you;<sup>35</sup> 4) Censure of controversy;<sup>36</sup> 5) Censure of fastidious speech;<sup>37</sup> 6) Censure of quarrelling;<sup>38</sup> 7) Speaking ill of the absent to be censured;<sup>39</sup> 8) What it means to 'speak ill of the absent';<sup>40</sup> 9) To whom it is permitted to speak ill of the absent;<sup>41</sup> 10) The Muslim defends his brother's honour;<sup>42</sup> 11) Censure of calumny;<sup>43</sup> 12) Censure of duplicity;<sup>44</sup> 13) It is forbidden to believers to mock one another;<sup>45</sup> 14) How to make amends when you have spoken ill of the absent;<sup>46</sup> 15) What one must do to speak well with all men;<sup>47</sup> 16) Censure of foul language and obscenity;<sup>48</sup> 17) What may not be said;<sup>49</sup> 18) Those

33 *Bāb ḥifẓ al-lisān wa faḍl al-samt, Kitāb al-ṣamt*, pp. 41-73, nos. 1-68.

34 *Al-nahy 'an fuḍūl al-kalām wa ḥawḍ al-bāṭil*, pp. 74-91, nos. 69-106.

35 *Al-nahy 'an al-kalām f-mā lā ya'nī-ka*, pp. 92-98, nos. 107-122.

36 *Ḍamm al-mirā'*, pp. 99-108, nos. 123-146.

37 *Ḍamm al-taqa'ur fī al-kalām*, pp. 109-112, nos. 147-152.

38 *Ḍamm al-ḥuṣūmāt*, pp. 113-117, nos. 152-161.

39 *Al-ġība wa ḍammī-hā*, pp. 117-134, nos. 162-203.

40 *Tafsīr al-ġība*, pp. 134-139, nos. 204-217.

41 *Al-ġība allatī yaḥillu li-ṣāḥibi-hā al-kalām bi-hā*, pp. 140-146, nos. 218-238.

42 *Ḍabb al-muslim 'an 'irḍ aḥī-hi*, pp. 147-152, nos. 239-250.

43 *Ḍamm al-namīma*, pp. 153-161, nos. 251-273.

44 *Ḍamm ḡī al-lisānayn*, pp. 162-166, nos. 274-281.

45 *Mā nuḥiya 'an-hu al-'ibād an yashāra ba'ḍu-hum min ba'ḍ*, pp. 167-170, nos. 282-290.

46 *Kaffārat al-iġtiyāb*, pp. 171-174, nos. 291-300.

47 *Mā umira bi-hi al-nās an yasta'milū fī-hi anfusa-hum min al-qawl al-ḥasan li-l-nās aġma'in*, pp. 175-180, nos. 301-316.

48 *Ḍamm al-fuḥṣ wa al-baḍā'*, pp. 181-191, nos. 317-340.

49 *Mā nuḥiya an yutakallama bi-hi*, pp. 192-201, nos. 341-370.

who curse should be censured;<sup>50</sup> 19) Censure of practical joking;<sup>51</sup> 20) Keeping a secret;<sup>52</sup> 21) Speak infrequently and with discretion;<sup>53</sup> 22) The excellence of sincerity;<sup>54</sup> 23) Keeping one's promises;<sup>55</sup> 24) Censure of lying;<sup>56</sup> 25) Censure of flatterers;<sup>57</sup> 26) Miscellany of preceding chapters.<sup>58</sup>

Chapter by chapter, the work is entirely made up of traditionistic material contemporary with that contained in the great *Ḥadīṭ* collections, presented similarly without introduction or commentary.<sup>59</sup> It comprises more than 700 stories<sup>60</sup> centred on the Prophet, on other leading personalities of emergent Islam – such as the Companions Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās, or the scholar al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī – and a number of caliphs dear to didactic literature – the 'Rightly-Guided' Abū Bakr (d. 13/634) and 'Omar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb (d. 23/644) or the Umayyad Mu'āwiya (d. 60/680) and 'Omar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (d.101/720).<sup>61</sup> As elsewhere in his oeuvre, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā makes reference to a number of figures from wider sacred history, most notably Jesus who appears frequently,<sup>62</sup> or the legendary Luqmān. On other occasions we meet Moses, Ishmael, Solomon, David, Adam and Dū al-Qarnayn.

Notwithstanding the material's arrangement into distinct sections, one's first impression on skimming the book is one of disorder, as if it had been composed with a degree of carelessness, in so far as near identical stories appear and reappear from one chapter to the next, or even within the same

50 *Ḍamm al-la'ānāyn*, pp. 203-208, nos. 371-387: note here an error on the editor's part (plural rather than dual).

51 *Ḍamm al-muzāh*, pp. 209-212, nos. 388-401.

52 *Ḥifz al-sirr*, pp. 213-214, nos. 402-408.

53 *Qillat al-kalām wa al-taḥaffuz fī al-manṭiq*, pp. 216-224, nos. 409-440.

54 *Al-ṣidq wa faḍli-hi*, pp. 225-229, nos. 441-452.

55 *Al-wafā' bi-l-wa'd*, pp. 230-233, nos. 453-465.

56 *Ḍamm al-kaḍb*, pp. 234-270, nos. 466-591.

57 *Ḍamm al-maddāhīn*, pp. 271-275, nos. 592-607.

58 *Ġāmi' li-mā taqaddama min al-abwāb*, pp. 275-313, nos. 608-754.

59 As is the author's habit, the one exception being his *Makārim al-aḥlāq*, on which see Bellamy (1963).

60 754 to be exact, over 313 manuscript pages.

61 «'Omar was something of an enigma: a prince of the despised Umayyad house, and yet a pious statesman worthy of nostalgia and imitation. As such, he is one of the few early historical personages who became the subject of discrete biographical works early on» Cobb 2012.

62 In more than twenty stories. On the presence of Jesus in Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's works, see Khalidi 2003, pp. 108-124.

chapter, with continual repetitions. The same is true of individuals: for example every chapter opens with one or more references to the Prophet Muḥammad, who then gives way to other protagonists, only to reappear from time to time in unpredictable fashion. Reading more carefully however, it becomes clear that Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's concern is to present his material in the most varied manner possible, pre-empting any comfortable expectations on the reader's part and wrong-footing him every time; this is his motive for switching personalities and settings, tones and registers, for passing abruptly from a lapidary saying to an extended narrative, or a poetic text, for touching on a certain theme to then return to it unexpectedly a few, or even many pages later. An approach that may well chime with the modern reader. Behind the apparent unconcern for strict form, we can in fact discern then an overall aesthetic intent in the order – or rather disorder – in which the anecdotes and quotes tumble after one another. A similar unpredictability can be found not so much in his style – calm and sober throughout, as is the norm for traditionistic material – as in his tone, which alternates serious, even solemn, passages with witty turns of phrase or semi-comic sallies.

## 5 *The Government of the Tongue and the Excellence of Silence*

Of the various sections making up *Silence and Good Manners in Speech*, the only one specifically dedicated to silence is the first, entitled *The Government of the Tongue and the Excellence of Silence*. We have thought it worthwhile to dedicate a little time to this chapter, by way of example, translating a few passages of note. As is entirely appropriate, it opens by remembering the Prophet's own silence. The narrator here is the notable Meccan 'Abd Allāh Abū Sufyān (d. 32/653 ca), in his time an enemy of both Islam and Muḥammad.

I asked: «Messenger of God, tell me something about Islam so that I never need ask again anyone else». «Say "I have believed in God", and keep to the right path (*istaqim*)». And I asked again: «And of what should I be beware?». He pointed with his hand at his tongue.<sup>63</sup>

In the work as a whole and this chapter in particular, the central theme is the importance of silence in religious observance and to ensure good

63 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, edited by al-Ḥuwaynī (1989, p. 41, no. 1; cf. p. 47, no. 7, and p. 56, no. 22). This anecdote is also recorded by Ibn Ḥanbal (*Musnad, musnad al-makkiyīn* no. 15112, edited by Šu'ayb al-Arna'ūt, 'Ādil Muršid et al., 1421/2001, also available at <http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-25794#page-1>). Henceforth for references to the literature of Tradition, cf. <http://library.islamweb.net> (2016-05-12).

fortune in one's life ahead. In this context a key example is Muḥammad's saying «He who believes in God and the Last Day should speak good or keep silent» which Ibn Abī al-Dunyā quotes twice, one almost right after the other, in parallel versions reported by Abū Hurayra and by Abū Šurayḥ al-Ḥuzā'ī (d. 68/687-8).<sup>64</sup> The author also attributes similar words to Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 35/656 ca),<sup>65</sup> and, in substance at least, to Jesus:

«Show us how we may enter into paradise». He answered: «Refrain entirely from speaking (*lā tanṭiqū abad<sup>an</sup>*)». «We are not capable of such a thing», they protested. «Then speak only of the good», he said.<sup>66</sup>

And again on the role of silence in good religious practice:

From Mu'āḍ ibn Ġabal (d. 18/639). I asked: «Messenger of God, will we be punished for what we say?». He exclaimed: «Your poor mother, Ibn Ġabal, that she has lost a son! Are men hurled head-first into hell for anything else other than the harvest of their tongues (*ḥaṣā'id alsinati-him*)?»<sup>67</sup>

Sometimes the anecdotes suggest a link between government of the tongue and hospitality. For example,

An Arab from the desert went to the Prophet: «Tell me what I must do to enter paradise», he asked him. «Feed the hungry, assuage the thirsty, command right (*ma'rūf*) and forbid wrong (*munkar*), and if you cannot do these things, hold your tongue always except to speak of what is good (*ḥayr*)».<sup>68</sup>

64 In the first using the root s-k-t («*fa-l-yaqul ḥayr<sup>an</sup> aw li-yaskut*», and in the second ṣ-m-t («*aw li-yašmut*»), *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 63 (respectively nos. 40 e 42). In an extended version which includes the duty of hospitality, the saying is repeated by Muslim (d. 261/875), *Šaḥīḥ, kitāb al-īmān*, no. 71, still from Abū Hurayra, and by al-Buḥārī (d. 256/870), *Šaḥīḥ, kitāb al-riqāq*, no. 6022, from Ḥuwaylid ibn 'Amr. It also appears in al-Dārimī (d. 255/869), ibn Māğā (d. 273/887), al-Tirmidī (d. 279/892), and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). Cf., again after the Prophet, *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 71, no. 64: «God has mercy on his servant who says good things and gains (*ğanima*) thereby, or who refrains from speaking ill (*sakata 'an sū'*) and remains safe and sound (*salima*)», from Ḥālid ibn Abī 'Imrān; similar is p. 63 (no. 41), again from the Prophet, from al-Ḥasan al-Bašrī (d. 110/728).

65 *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 64, no. 44.

66 *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 66, no. 46, from Sufyān al-Ṭawrī (d. 161/778).

67 *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 46, no. 6; cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, *musnad al-anšār*, no. 21494.

68 *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 72, no. 67, from al-Barā. There is a more extended variant in al-Buḥārī, *Al-adab al-mufrad*, no. 69. Cf. the following anecdote by al-Aswad ibn Ašram al-Muḥāribī. «I said: "Messenger of God, give me a commandment". He asked: "Are you in command of your hand?" I answered: "And what can I command if not my own hand!?" He asked again:

From 'Uqba ibn 'Āmir (d. 58/677-8). I asked: «Messenger of God, what is salvation (*nağāh*)?». He answered: «Control (*amlīk*) your tongue,<sup>69</sup> and may your house be ample for you (*wa-l-yasa'-ka*),<sup>70</sup> and weep for your sins».<sup>71</sup>

An analogous theme is the relationship between silence and charity: «Blessed are those who give their excess money and hold back their excess words», the Prophet is reported as saying.<sup>72</sup> Again from the Prophet: «Hold back the spiteful things (*šarr*) [you might address] to others; this is a benefaction (*šadaqa*) that you make to yourself».<sup>73</sup>

Accounts of this type, pairing the religious with the social efficacy of silence, make up the greater part of the material collected by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā. As often as not, this pairing is evenly balanced, as in the following anecdote by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī which involves the Caliph Mu'āwiya with another icon of judiciousness, al-Aḥnaf al-Tamīmī (d. 67/686-7):

They were chattering at Mu'āwiya's [...] and [Abū Baḥr] al-Aḥnaf was silent. «What is it with you that you won't speak, Abū Baḥr?», they asked him. He answered: «If I speak falsely, I fear God; if I speak the truth I fear you».<sup>74</sup>

A similar aphorism from one Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sukkārī, which echoes the Koranic silence-listening above:

Silence (*šamt*) guarantees a man two good things (*ḥaṣḥlatayn*) at once: the integrity of his religion (*al-salāma fī dīni-hi*) and the comprehension of what his companion says (*al-fahm 'an šāḥibi-hi*).<sup>75</sup>

“Are you in command of your tongue?” I answered: “And what can I command if not my own tongue!” He said: “Stretch out your hand then only towards the good, and speak only good (*ma'rūf*) with your tongue» *Kitāb al-šamt*, 64 (no. 43).

69 Cf. *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 48, no. 10: «He who is silent shall be saved» (*man šamata nağā*), a saying of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr's.

70 Meaning: «So that you will be able to accommodate others».

71 *Kitāb al-šamt*, again p. 41, no. 2; cf. Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, *musnad al-anṣār*, no. 21649 and Ibn Wahb, *Kitāb al-šamt*, no. 299 (cf. no. 374). Further on the author attributes a similar saying to Jesus, *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 52, no. 15: «Blessed are those who mourn their sins, govern their tongues and keep a spacious house». Cf. too 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr's saying above (note 72).

72 *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 43, no. 64, from Rakb al-Miṣrī.

73 *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 68, no. 73, from Abū Ḍarr. The saying occurs in an extended version in Muslim, *kitāb al-īmān*, no. 122.

74 *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 70, no. 62.

75 *Kitāb al-šamt*, p. 69, no. 55.

In short, the government of the tongue furthers good relations with one's fellows and is equally pleasing to God. But on occasions the emphasis is weighted more towards serene relations with other Muslims:

The Messenger of God said: «The believer (*mu'min*) is one whom people trust (*amina-hu*); the Muslim (*muslim*) is one who spares other Muslims (*salima al-muslimūn 'an [...]*) his tongue and his hand;<sup>76</sup> the emigrant (*muhājir*) is one who abandons (*hağara*) evil (*sū'*);<sup>77</sup> and in the name of He who owns me, no-one will enter paradise who has not spared his neighbour [the recital of] his misfortunes».<sup>78</sup>

The chapter we have chosen to look at as an example turns not only on silence but also, as we have seen, on the 'government' – or 'protection' or 'safeguarding' (*ḥifẓ*) – of the tongue as if it were a precious asset. And of course there is the well-known maxim that Ibn Abī al-Dunyā attributes to Solomon, comparing words to riches: «If speech is silver, silence (*ṣamt*) is golden»;<sup>79</sup> famous now the world over, it seems that it is first recorded here in the Arabic literature in two, very similar, versions, by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā and by the slightly older al-Ġāḥiẓ (d. 255/868-9).<sup>80</sup> To the same context belongs what Muḥammad ibn Wāsi' al-Azdī (d. 123/740-1) said to the Basra preacher Mālik ibn Dīnār (d. 130/747 ca): «It is harder to keep a grip on one's tongue than on *dīnār* and *dirham*».<sup>81</sup>

Clearly, in these writings, silence always has positive connotations whereas speech may be a good or a bad thing at the same time; on the ambiguity of speech we have another eloquent saying of the Prophet's: «The best (*ayman*) thing and the ugliest (*aš'am*) that each one of you has is between your jaws».<sup>82</sup> There are also a number of citations which, even

76 Up to here cf. p. 59, no. 29.

77 Up to here cf. p. 57, no. 25.

78 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 58, no. 28, from Anas. Cf. p. 48, no. 9: «A man's faith cannot be considered irreproachable until his heart is irreproachable, and his heart is not irreproachable until his tongue is irreproachable. No one will enter into paradise who has not spared his fellows [the recital of] his misfortunes»; cf. also the very similar p. 57, no. 26, and p. 58, no. 28.

79 *In kāna al-kalām min fiğḍa fa-al-ṣamt min ḡahab*, *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 66 (no. 47), from the celebrated Syrian jurist al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774).

80 The only difference being that the second employs *sukūt* rather than *ṣamt* for 'silence'. Cfr. Wasserstein 1999, particularly pp. 247-249.

81 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 69, no. 57. On the parallel treatment of speech and money, cf. p. 56, no. 24.

82 «[...] and that is the tongue». *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 70, no. 63, from 'Adī ibn Ḥātim (d. 68/687-8). The saying is sparsely attested, but does appear in Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965)'s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 5835, on the same authority.

if negatively, commend silence, while at the same time awarding a certain grandeur to the word. Examples would be the following anecdotes, concerning Muḥammad's earliest successors:

'Omar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb saw Abū Bakr about to exercise his tongue. «What are you doing, Caliph of God's Messenger?» he asked him. The other replied: «This has procured me a deal of trouble (*awrāda-nī al-mawārid*). And the Messenger of God has said that there is nothing in the body that does not complain to God about the sharp end (*ḥidda*) of the tongue».<sup>83</sup>

'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) said: «The tongue heads the body (cf. *qiwām al-badan*), and if it keeps to the right path the members of the body too will follow the right path, but if the tongue bolts off (*iḍṭaraba*), no other part of the body can rein it in (*lam yaqum la-hu*)».<sup>84</sup>

Which suggests that speech requires constant attention – «more even than looking where to place our feet»<sup>85</sup> – but not so much on account of its being a gift in need of tutelage but rather as a potential danger to be wary of. On this subject Ibn Abī al-Dunyā relays a witticism of the already cited Mālik ibn Dīnār's, based on the idea that human words, being over-represented among reprehensible behaviours, cause a great deal of work for the angelic scribes: «If it were men that had to keep the ledgers (*ṣuḥuf*), they would talk less».<sup>86</sup>

Thus, the only way of being sure to avoid sinning with the tongue is to keep quiet, as the celebrated traditionist Anas ibn Mālik (d. 93/712) used to teach: «Those who are happy to remain safe and sound, keep their mouths shut».<sup>87</sup> But silence may not come so easily:

From Ramla bint Ṣaḥr (d. 46/666).<sup>88</sup> «Every word a man utters can harm him», said the Prophet, «except commanding right and forbidding

83 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 50, no. 13, from 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Uṭmān; cf. p. 55, no. 19, where the passage appears in abbreviated form.

84 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 69, no. 58. Cf. a saying by Abū Sa'īd al-Ḥudrī (d. 74/693-4): «When a man wakes up, all his limbs wake and admonish (*tukaffiru*) his tongue, saying: "Be fearful of God for our sakes, because when you follow the right path (*istaqamta*) we will do the same, but if you follow a crooked path (*i'waḡaḡta*), we will follow you there too"», *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 49, no. 12; cf. Al-Tirmiḏī, *kitāb al-zuḥd*, no. 2344.

85 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 60, no. 32, from Abū Ḥayyān al-Taymī (d. 145/762-3).

86 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 66, no. 48.

87 *Man sarra-hu an yaslama, fa-l-yalzam al-ṣamt, Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 49, no. 11. The saying is taken up by later authors, for example al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971), *Al-mu'ḡam al-awṣat*, no. 1976 in Ṭāriq ibn 'Awaḍ Allāh and Muḥsin al-Ḥusayn's edition (1415-1995).

88 One of Muḥammad's wives, better known as Umm Ḥabība.

wrong,<sup>89</sup> or the remembrance (*dīkr*) of God». A man expostulated: «How hard is [to obey] this saying».<sup>90</sup>

One day, Dāwud al-Ṭā'ī (d.165/781-2)<sup>91</sup> said to Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz: «Did you know that governing one's tongue (*ḥifẓ al-lisān*) is the hardest and most meritorious thing we can do?» «Certainly», Muḥammad replied, «but how do we achieve it?»<sup>92</sup>

Given the word's potential for wickedness, it's government can easily be interpreted as concealment or seclusion; and it is a short step from there to find prohibitions on speech assimilated to those on sexuality and inappropriate talk compared to the sin of adultery (*zinā*), sometimes in quite crude terms. For example:

From Abū Hurayra. They asked the Messenger of God what of all things most helped people to enter paradise. He replied: «The fear of God (*taqwā*) and an upright character (*ḥusn al-ḥuluq*)».<sup>93</sup> They asked him what was most likely to send folk to hell, and he answered: «Those two cavities, the vulva and the mouth».<sup>94</sup>

From Sahl ibn Sa'd. The Messenger of God has said: «Whoever can vouch for what he has between his jaws and what he has between his legs, I will guarantee him paradise».<sup>95</sup>

Similarly strong parallels are drawn between speech and wild beasts,

89 Up to here cf. *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 59, no. 30.

90 This is followed by Abū Sufyān's reprimand, citing various passages from the Koran. *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 52, no. 14. Cf. al-Tirmiḍī, *kitāb al-zuhd*, no. 2349 and ibn Māḡa, *kitāb al-fitān*, no. 3972.

91 Among the leading disciples of Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767).

92 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 69, no. 56.

93 Up to here cf. p. 58, no. 27.

94 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 44, no. 4. Repeated in very similar form by ibn Māḡa, *kitāb al-zuhd*, no. 4244, and by Ibn Ḥanbal, *musnad al-'ašara al-mubaššarīn bi-l-ḡanna*, 8890, on the same authority. Cf. *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 55, no. 21, from Ibn 'Omar: «The Messenger of God said: "He who holds (*kaffā*) his tongue, the excellent and most high God will cover his nudity (*satara 'awrata-hu*), and he who masters his anger the excellent and most high God will keep him from his sins, and he who is penitent before the excellent and most high God will find his penitence accepted"». Cf. also the verses of 'Abd al-Raḥmān, son of Ḥassān al-Ṭābit (the latter d. around 670ce), a panegyrist of the Prophet, *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 71, no. 66.

95 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 44, no. 3; cfr. p. 55, no. 20. Not widely recorded, this saying appears in a *lectio brevior* by al-Ḥarā'iṭī, *Masāwī' al-aḥlāq*, no. 480 in Muṣṭafā al-Šiblī's edition (1412/1992), from 'Ā'iša.



going beyond government to preventive detention. An anonymous sage once declared: «My tongue is a savage beast (*sabu'*) and if I let it loose I fear it will devour me». <sup>96</sup> Along the same lines we have a declaration by Ibn Mas'ūd: «I swear by Him who alone is God, nothing has need [...] of lengthy imprisonment (*ṭūl siġn<sup>in</sup>*) more than the tongue». <sup>97</sup>

A final point to note is the relationship between silence and intellectual activity.

Ibn Abī al-Dunyā attributes the following definition of the intelligent person (*'āqil*) to «the wisdom of the line of David»: he is the man who can identify the right moment (*'ārif<sup>an</sup> bi-zamāni-hi*), can govern his tongue (*ḥāfiẓ<sup>an</sup> li-lisāni-hi*) and minds his own business (*muqbil<sup>an</sup> 'alā šā'ni-hi*). <sup>98</sup> And with more direct reference to Islam, the author recalls the Caliph 'Omar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb – «He who talks a lot, errs a lot» <sup>99</sup> – and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī – «The man has not understand his religion (*mā 'aqala dīna-hu*) who cannot govern his tongue». <sup>100</sup> This 'intelligent silence' can have a sense of standing apart from certain groups of people if their talk is futile and confined to worldly matters. Wuhayb ibn al-Ward (d. 153/770 ca) maintains that «wisdom (*ḥikma*) has ten components, and nine of these consist of silence (*ṣamt*), while the tenth is isolating oneself (*'uzla*) from others»; <sup>101</sup> where isolation however indicates «being with others and if they immerse themselves in the remembrance of God, then you should dive in with them, but if they immerse themselves in other things, then remain silent (*fa-askut*)». <sup>102</sup>

It is not for Ibn Abī al-Dunyā then a question of fleeing the world but of living better in the world, thanks to a learned understanding of its rules, as ideally represented by the Prophet and the pious. On this theme the author presents us with a story whose protagonist is the Khorasan Šūfī Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 161/777-8), also celebrated elsewhere in Islamic literature for his intelligence and moral stature. <sup>103</sup>

96 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 63, no. 39, from Sufyān al-Ṭawrī. Cf. p. 67, no. 51, a saying of Abū 'Imrān al-Ġawfī: «The tongue of each one of you is a dog (*kalb*), if you give it power of you it will devour you»; cf. also p. 70, no. 61.

97 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 53, no. 16, from Anas (cf. p. 56, no. 23). The missing passage is a terminological clarification attributed to Abū Mu'āwiya.

98 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 60, no. 31, from the Yemenite scholar Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 110/728 or 114/732).

99 *Man kaṭura kalāmu-hu kaṭura saqaṭu-hu*, *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, 68 (no. 53); identical but «from an Indian sage» *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, no. 54.

100 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 61, no. 34.

101 *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 62, no. 36.

102 From 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 62, no. 37; cf. p. 63, no. 38.

103 For his reputation in Persian, Hindi and Indonesian literature cf. Jones (2012).

Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī (d. 188/803 ca) says: Ibrāhīm ibn Adham would be quiet for long periods and then when he talked would hardly stop. One day he had been quiet for a good while and so I said to him: «Might you decide to say something?» He answered: «There are four kinds of conversation. One is where you hope for some advantage (*manfa'a*) but also fear some harm (*'āqiba*) will come from it, when abstaining [from speech] will spare you [the harm]. The second is speech from which you fear no harm but in which you can see no advantage, therefore avoiding it costs your tongue or body nothing. A third is where you hope for no advantage but cannot be sure of escaping harm, which should be enough for the man of intelligence. Finally, there are conversations where you are sure to risk nothing and where advantage may accrue; well then, [only] these should be engaged in».<sup>104</sup>

Finally, in the same vein as the preceding anecdote, a quotation that extends the appreciation of silence to other cultures and recommends it as a value to be universally shared, in 'secular' or at least religiously neutral terms:

Four kings met together and challenged one another to make one declaration, each having just the one speech at his disposal. They were the King of India, the King of China, Chosroes and Caesar. The first said: «I regret (*andamu*) what I have said, but I do not regret what I have not said». And the second: «When I speak, my words control me and not I them; when I do not speak, I control them and not they me». The third: «I am amazed by those who speak, and either their words backfire on them, or, if they do not backfire, they do them no credit». And the fourth: «I can stand by what I have not said, better than by what I have said».<sup>105</sup>

## 6 Conclusions

The Koran refers to silence through the use of three different verbal roots (ṣ-m-t, s-k-t, n-ṣ-t), and this lexical richness translates, in exegetical thought, into a complex semantics. The leading commentators (here represented chiefly by the Sunnites al-Ṭabarī and al-Rāzī) stress the simultaneous presence of a negative element, of closure or restriction, and a positive one, of openness and availability: on the one side, then, silence as abstention (*kaff*), calm (*sukūn*), avoidance of the complications of sin

<sup>104</sup> *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 76, no. 50. The chronicler of this saying, Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī, is a traditionist from Kufa well known to the moral literature; on him, see Muranyi (1985, pp. 63-97). The authority is the Prophet's Companion, Ḥalaf ibn Tamīm who comments in closing: «You have left out three quarters of the speech!», to which al-Fazārī replied: «Yes», *Kitāb al-ṣamt*.

<sup>105</sup> *Kitāb al-ṣamt*, p. 71, no. 65, from Abū Bakr ibn 'Ayyāš al-Muqri' (d. 193/809).

and wickedness; on the other, silence as a prerequisite of listening, and particularly of listening to the words of the Koran, in prayer or preaching, and consequently as a route to the study of religion, not least in the sense of its rational comprehension (cf. *tafahhum*, *i'tibār*, *tadabbur*, *'aql*).

Both elements, the positive and the negative, we find too in the moral literature dedicated to silence, part and parcel of the wider 'religious *adab*'. With one or two peculiarities.

Firstly, as can be seen from an overview of the titles of works that have come down to us, they by no means read silence (*ṣamt* or *sukūt* without apparent distinction) as a prohibition to which the believer must subscribe, a sort of 'fast of silence',<sup>106</sup> but as a more general 'government of the tongue' (*ḥifẓ al-lisān*); thus assimilating silence to disciplined speech. Exhortations to this reading of silence stem from two quite different presuppositions. Silence can be taken as a prophylactic against speech's potential debasement of itself; as the power of speech is a gift from God to man. On the other hand, silence can be interpreted as a defence against the many ills speech may bring about, some as serious as breaches of sexual mores and dangerous as wild beasts on the loose.

Secondly, compared to the exegetical literature, the moral literature lays a considerable emphasis on the sociological aspect alongside the strictly religious; this is evident for example in Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's *Kitāb al-ṣamt wa ādāb al-lisān*, and especially in its opening chapter. In this work as in others belonging to the same genre, the disciplining of speech is specified as a comportment pleasing to God – and therefore a help on the road to paradise – precisely because it is also welcome to one's fellow men, like charity and hospitality. In this sense silence signifies particularly abstinence from scandalmongering and other verbal misdemeanours including unasked for or inappropriate speech or the recital of one's own misfortunes.

Lastly, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā highlights silence as listening, that is as the acknowledgement, respect for and understanding of others, but also as the recognition of being one part of a group of interlocutors. And this means no less than the whole of human society, given that – our author is suggesting between the lines – such active, open and above all intelligent listening cannot but overflow the boundaries of any one faith.

106 In any case forbidden on the basis of a saying of the Prophet's («*nahā 'an ṣawm al-ṣamt*») passed down by the *Musnad Abī Ḥanīfa*, no. 213, 214 e 264.

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## The Nationalist Movement in Morocco and the Struggle for Independence between Civil Protest and Religious Propaganda (1930-1956)

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**Abstract** In precolonial Morocco, dominated by a sultanate of religious origin (the Alawite dynasty), political fault lines referred to clans and guilds, in a social and cultural context firmly based on Islam. To defend its borders against both Ottomans and Europeans, Morocco chose a more closed policy than that current in the Middle East, staying at the edge of the progressive and secularizing reforms which were affecting nineteenth century culture and institutions of other Muslim countries such as Turkey, Egypt and Tunisia (Burke 1972). The treaty of Fes of March 30, 1912, which placed the country under a protectorate (Rivet 1996), profoundly changed this situation, plunging Morocco into modern dynamics. Though the process was doubtless gradual, it's possible to establish the moment when pre-colonial political dialectics gave way to new forms which would lead the country towards new expressions and contents, in the events which followed the publication of the Berber dahir on May 16, 1930.

**Keywords** Morocco. Nationalism. Protectorate. Secularism.

**Summary** 1 The Berber Dahir and the Birth of Moroccan Nationalism. – 2 *Plan de Réformes* and Propaganda. – 3 *Istiqlal*. – 4 Conclusions.

In precolonial Morocco, dominated by a sultanate of religious origin (the Alawite dynasty),<sup>1</sup> political fault lines referred to clans and guilds, in a social and cultural context firmly based on Islam. To defend its borders against both Ottomans and Europeans, Morocco chose a more closed policy than that current in the Middle East, staying at the edge of the progressive and secularizing reforms which were affecting nineteenth century culture and institutions of other Muslim countries such as Turkey, Egypt and Tunisia (Burke 1972). The treaty of Fes of March 30, 1912, which placed the country under a protectorate (Rivet 1996), profoundly changed this situ-

<sup>1</sup> The Alawite dynasty has been ruling Morocco since about 1666. Due to their descent from the Prophet, the Alawite sultans/kings call themselves *amīr al-mu'minīn*, commanders of the faithful, or *imām*, a title attributed to the legitimate successors of Muḥammad. Though not claiming the function of caliph, they do claim religious authority over their subjects (Agnouche 1987; Laroui 1993; Levi-Provençal 1991).



ation, plunging Morocco into modern dynamics.<sup>2</sup> Though the process was doubtless gradual, it's possible to establish the moment when pre-colonial political dialectics gave way to new forms which would lead the country towards new expressions and contents, in the events which followed the publication of the Berber dahir on May 16, 1930.

## 1 The Berber Dahir and the Birth of Moroccan Nationalism

The famous decree, intended to deislamicize and directly frenchify the Berber regions, through an administration juridically independent from Islamic courts (Ageron 1972; Lafuente 1999; Marty 1925), unleashed the first public anti-French reaction, giving voice to Moroccan proto-nationalism (Rézette 1955, Halstead 1969, Damis 1973, Cagne 1988). In accordance with local culture, response to the dahir was expressed in Islamic terms, mainly mobilizing the religious sensitivity which had hitherto dominated the reflections of the more anti-French intelligentsia (the attack on Islam by the infidels). Especially, Muḥammad al-Yazīdī and 'Abd al-Laṭīf Ṣbiḥī (Halstead 1969, p. 181; Lafuente 1999, p. 187) came up with the idea of adapting the most immediate, popular and resounding manner of invoking divine aid when Islam is threatened to the political contingency; they thus turned *laṭīf*, prayer against natural disasters (such as earthquakes and locusts) into a collective prayer against the French. Starting in Rabat and Salè, where some youth came together to recite it in the mosques, *laṭīf* had an immediate impact on the population, which took part in mass demonstrations in the main cities until September. In August, in order to support and organize protests, the ten young promoters of the *laṭīf* in Fes founded the Jamā'a al-waṭaniyya (Patriotic Group) to defend 'religion, fatherland and throne'. Among these young men were 'Allāl al-Fāsī, Ḥasan al-Wazzānī, Aḥmad Makwār, Ḥasan Bū'ayyād, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Tāzī and Muḥammad al-Dyūrī (Halstead 1969, p. 182), some of the future leaders of the Moroccan nationalist movement.

The protectorate reacted harshly against the anti-dahir campaign, carrying out a wave of arrests which led the Patriotic Group to mobilize outside Morocco's borders, in Europe and the Middle East. The strategic turning point in the nationalist movement came at this very beginning, thanks to the meeting with the well-known Lebanese nationalist Ṣakīb Arslān<sup>3</sup>

2 The sultanate survived French occupation, turning into a monarchy which at times cooperated and at times was at odds with the nationalist movement, a relationship which it managed to turn to its own advantage at the time of independence (De Poli 2013).

3 Ṣakīb Arslān, born in a Druze village in the mountains of Lebanon in 1869, first supported Ottoman nationalism in an anti-imperialist perspective, then with the fall of the Empire in 1922 became a key figure of the pan-Arab independence movement. Especially in

(Cleveland 1985; Lafuente 1999; 'Azūz Hakīm 1980). During the anti-dahir campaign, Arslān went to Morocco passing through Tangier, and on August 14, 1930, reached Tétouan, where he met the leaders of the nationalist groups of Rabat and Fes, including Aḥmad Balāfrīj, 'Umar 'Abd al-Jalīl and Muḥammad al-Fāsī. It was then, it seems, that he advised the young Moroccan nationalists to remove any reference or action which could bring to mind the idea of jihad (war for faith) from the anti-colonial campaign, and instead to stress the violation of civil rights stemming directly from the Fes treaty ('Azūz Hakīm 1980, p. 16). This was a decisive meeting, since it allowed the young Moroccan activists to outgrow strategic archaism already during the founding stage, taking on a modern and secular political vision which would soon emerge in terms of propaganda and practical demands<sup>4</sup> - without, however, abandoning religious language.

The relationship which the nationalist movement would have with the two different political discourses (religious and secular) should also be seen in the light of the cultural education of its militants.

Summer 1930 saw the birth of two clandestine groups: al-Zāwiya, a more elite organization, born to study problems caused by foreign occupation, and al-Ṭā'ifa, open to new sympathizers and designed to establish new cells in the main towns. The goal of both was to denounce the abuses of French colonial policy in Morocco *tout court*, and in summer 1933 a committee was established by al-Zāwiya, called Kutla al-'Amal al-Waṭānī, better known by its French name 'Comité d'Action Marocain' (CAM) to draw up a reform plan. The internal composition of the three groups - CAM, al-Zāwiya and al-Ṭā'ifa - reveal their culturally mixed nature: the reins of the protests and the nationalist movement were in the hands of a youthful urban intelligentsia (Echaoui 1993), mainly fresh university graduates from Fes and Rabat with a modern or traditional religious education. Traditional Islamic education took place in the *madrasas*, especially the Qarawīyyīn in Fes, and was based on religious subjects (mainly Islamic law and exegesis), while modern education was provided in the new schools founded by the French: the Franco-Muslim colleges, bilingual (Arabic and French) with a Franco-Moroccan culture, or directly in the *lycées* established in Morocco for colonizers and later in universities in France (Paye 1992, Merrouni 1981, Gaudefroy-Demombynes 1928, Spillmann 1938, Berque 1949).

Within the nationalist movement, the two cultural currents would blend in a shared desire to fight the protectorate, but during the nationalist

Europe where he lived for many years, he had a fundamental influence on the communities of exiles and on young Arabs completing their studies in the West.

4 However, local demonstrations with a fully religious character continued taking places, such as the riots in Khemisset in 1937, which broke out in defence of the shariah, or those at Meknes in protest against usurpation of a *habous* estate (the water of the river Boufekrane, mortmain of religious establishments). Rézette (1955, p. 281) says that «the list is endless».

struggle, different vocations, the use of different instruments and strategies would emerge and leave a mark on the future of Morocco.

Out of twenty-nine members, mostly from Rabat and Fes, thirteen spoke French and eight of these had at least a higher modern education<sup>5</sup> while one had a traditional higher education as well.<sup>6</sup> Out of Arabic speakers, seven had a higher Islamic education<sup>7</sup> (Halstead 1969, pp. 278-280). Altogether, therefore, French speakers were a minority, but could count on a better *curriculum studiorum* than their colleagues. In any case, one can see that, as a whole, they worked together and distributed their roles according to aptitudes and skills (Halstead 1969; Rézette 1955). Leadership, theoretical and organisational work seem to have been split up indifferently between Arabic and French speakers, and while propaganda in France fell to the French speakers (especially al-Wazzānī, Balāfrīj, Muḥammad al-Fāsī, b. Jallūn and al-Ḥultī) the Arabic speakers – among whom ‘Allāl al-Fāsī stood out – managed domestic propaganda and propaganda in the Arab Orient. All the propagandists in France had attended Parisian universities, knew the cultural and political milieu of the capital, cultivated contacts and support among anti-imperialist politicians and journalists (Oved 1978, 1984). Much the same can be said concerning the choice of members having an Islamic education for propaganda at home and in the Arab world.

However, the modernist approach forcefully emerges in the document called *Plan de Réformes Marocaines*, drawn up by the CAM and published in 1934.

## 2 *Plan de Réformes and Propaganda*

The reform plan drawn up by CAM did not call for an end to the mandate of the protectorate; on the contrary, it called for stricter and more consistent application of the principles agreed upon in the treaty of Fes, by which France engaged to assist Morocco in its process of modernization. Espe-

5 Aḥmad al-Šarqāwī, Muḥammad al-Dyūrī, Makkī al-Nāšīrī, Muḥammad and ‘Umar al-Sabtī, Muḥammad al-Yazīdī graduated from the School of Higher Moroccan Studies, ‘Abd al-Kabīr al-Fāsī, graduated in Moroccan legal studies in 1926, ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Jalīl, graduated from the School of Agriculture in Montpellier in 1925; ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Jallūn, Muḥammad al-Fāsī, Muḥammad al-Ḥultī, Ḥasan al-Wazzānī, and Aḥmad Balāfrīj, all of whom graduated from the Sorbonne between 1927 and 1934.

6 Muḥammad al-Fāsī, but many others graduated with degrees in Arabic or, like the perfectly bilingual Ḥassan al-Wazzānī, had studied Arabic privately.

7 ‘Allāl al-Fāsī, Muḥammad al-Ġāzī, Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī, Sa‘īd al-Ḥajj, Būšta Jamā‘ī, Muḥammad al-Fāsī, Ḥasan Bū‘ayyād.

cially, it called for suppression of signs of direct administration<sup>8</sup> invoking participation by Moroccans in the government of their own country, in a system based on full public liberty.<sup>9</sup>

The document was largely the result of collective work. Witnesses say (Halstead 1969, p. 210) that some chapters were written entirely by one person and then reviewed in a meeting, while other parts were the outcome of group discussions. The minutes of the meetings were drawn up in Arabic, as were the first drafts of the *Plan de Réformes* and the final manuscript. The first edition, in a limited number of copies, was printed in Arabic in Cairo in September 1934, whereas the French version – which became the de facto official version and which I have dealt with as such – was published in Paris the following November and submitted to the authorities on December 1st.

For details, I refer the reader to the original document; however, even a superficial reading of the *Plan de Réformes* shows the powerful influence on it of militants of French culture, something which appears both from the wording and the theoretical and technical guidelines of the reform project, that reveals a very secularized approach. Although it was a shared project, the Western sources used to express political, economic and social concepts clearly emerge: for example, the project of civil and legal administration was based on the French one, the ideas of economic reform based on nationalisation were taken from socialist ideology, and those on civil rights from liberalism (Halstead 1969, p. 216); and even the administrative model held to be ideally suited to Morocco corresponds, in its general outline, to the administrative practice of the French administration already in force, while the partiality and discrimination of this administration are denounced. The project for modernizing the country touches every sphere – social, economic, legal, administrative, educational, technological – and the text does not complain of any attack on Islam, which appears to be mainly a matter of values; the only references are to

8 In the *Plans de Réformes* (Comité d'Action 1934, VIII-X) we read, concerning the policy of the protectorate: «It is racial [...]; it promotes fiscal and budgetary favouritism [...]; it is obscurantist [...]; anti-liberal [...]; colonialist [...]; assimilationist: it is based on the principle of direct administration and takes the shape of an organised struggle against our institutions, our Arab culture and our traditions».

9 The same document proposes reforms involving various sectors of society, as can be seen from the list of chapters: Political reforms (1 - Administrative organization; 2 - Private and public freedom; 3 - Moroccan nationality and civil state); Judicial reforms (4 - Justice and penitentiary system); Social reforms (5 - Teaching; 6 - Habous; Public health and welfare; Labor); Economic and financial reforms (9 - Political economy; 10- Colonization and Moroccan agriculture; 11 - Real estate regime; 12 - Taxes and *tertib*); Special reforms (13 - Berber policy and proselytism; 14 - Arabic official language; 15 - Other reforms).

shariah, which appears to be restricted to the area of family law<sup>10</sup> and to religious teaching limited to the Qarawiyyīn – while a modern system of education is prefigured.

The *Plan de Réformes* represents a decisive step in the development of Morocco's nationalist movement, although it failed to achieve the result it looked forward to. The failure of the project, which was not taken into any consideration by the Residency, put a temporary stop to the activities of CAM, but also determined its future development. Since the most significant French criticism of the document highlighted the fact that it claimed to represent a population which was actually mostly indifferent to colonial policy,<sup>11</sup> quest for popular support became a crucial issue for the Committee. As Rézette (1955, p. 97) put it: «It is not enough to speak in the name of the 'Moroccan people'. One needs to prove it».

The first party congress, held in Rabat on October 25, 1936 (Halstead 1969, p. 320; Rézette 1955, p. 98; El Alami 1975, p. 66) decided to extend the base of the *Kutla* by convening popular assemblies throughout Morocco. Especially, the policy of détente inaugurated by the new Resident General, Charles Noguès, who in late 1936 granted amnesty to about 37 nationalists and in January authorized nationalist magazines, gave the movement breathing space. The *Kutla* aimed at establishing a large scale and firm organization, based on the widest possible popular participation, opening new branches. To this end, an Executive Committee, a High Council, technical committees and local sections were set up, launching a recruitment campaign.

It is worth mentioning that, while the *Plan de Réformes*, mainly disseminated in French, expressed modern and almost secular positions, when proselytizing, the *Kutla* again appealed, in Arabic, to religious feelings (Halstead 1969, p. 241). With success: in a short time, CAM gathered a membership of 6,500 people, and 20 new branches throughout the country were added to the 12 extant ones, mainly located in the north. Journalism too, which thanks to Noguès' tolerant policy flourished, showed a double discourse: in Rabat, two weeklies – *al-Atlas* (The Atlas) in Arabic and *L'Action populaire* in French – came out as the 'Organe Hebdomadaire du Parti d'Action Marocaine'. *Al-Mağrib* (Maghreb), in Arabic, also controlled

10 Point 6 specifies: «Distinction between two classes of jurisdiction both depending on the Vizierate of Justice : a) Chraâ jurisdictions dealing with personal status, inheritance and real estate disputes; b) Makhzen jurisdictions dealing with all business other than that for which the Chraâ are competent».

11 However, documents in the archive of the Department of the Interior include a letter sent to the Resident General by the inhabitants of Salé in support of the *Plan of Reforms* and signed by some hundred notables and ulama. The papers of the Interior Office show that the Residency deemed the matter worthy of extreme attention and caution. *AD, Maroc, DI, 365, 1934-35.*

by the *Kutla*, was more moderate, while the monthly *La voix du Maroc* was published by the CAM office in Paris. In January 1937, al-Wazzānī also began to publish *L'action du peuple* and in April, the first issue of *al-'Amal* (Action) came out. The fact that each organ in Arabic of the movement was accompanied by one in French (or vice versa) gives an idea of how complementary the two cultures were to each other for the nationalist movement. Cooperation between French educated al-Wazzānī and islamically educated 'Allāl al-Fāsī in designing the new structure of CAM in late 1936 seems equally to fit this line.

The success of the *Kutla*, marked by opening of new branches and the success of its publications, soon led to it being banned by decree on March 18, 1937. Censorship was not however extended to newspapers, and at first the movement was able to operate clandestinely without excessive losses. The party was founded again, de facto, in Rabat in April under the name of Al-Ḥizb al-Waṭānī li-Taḥqīq al-Maṭālib (National Party for the Realization of Demands, PN) while the internal conflict proceeded, leading to the withdrawal of al-Wazzānī, who decided to establish his own party, the Popular Movement (MP),<sup>12</sup> which would end up playing a secondary role. However, in autumn, a wave of repression deprived the movement of its leaders, almost all of whom were arrested, driven into exile or flight abroad. From then to the end of World War II, the nationalist movement largely went into lethargy.

### 3 Istiqlal

Though a new generation of militants with modern education, such as Maḥdī b. Barka, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Bū'abīd or 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Yūsufī (Daoud, Monjib 1996) had brought fresh blood into the party during the war, the PI was rebuilt only by return from prison or exile of the old leadership,<sup>13</sup> when the party was able to start activity again, promoting propaganda and demands. In 1943, when the leadership decided to move on to demand independence, with the publication of the *Manifeste de l'Indépendance du Maroc*, the PN turned into the Ḥizb al-Istiqlāl (Independence Party, IP), launching the final phase of the nationalist struggle (Lacouture 1958, Bouaziz 1997, Rivet 1999).

<sup>12</sup> There was a largely personal clash with 'Allāl al-Fāsī for leadership of the movement, which however involved a conflict opposing a more democratic vision of the party (al-Wazzānī) to a more authoritarian and hierarchical one (al-Fāsī). Intervention by the ulama and by Šakīb Arslān failed to heal the split (Rézette 1955, p. 103; Halstead 1969, p. 244; al-Dafāli 1992, p. 94; al-Fāsī 1993, p. 224; al-Wazzānī 1982, vol. 513; Ouazzani 1989, p. 13).

<sup>13</sup> Balāfrīj came back from the Spanish zone in January 1943, took leadership of the Rabat school back in his hands along with that of Istiqlal ('Allāl al-Fāsī, while remaining the official leader of the party, returned from Gabon only in 1947).

A short but complete picture of Istiqlal activity in 1952, when the party was at the peak of its popularity – before a new repressive phase by the Residency – appears in the «Synthèse activité extrémiste» which the Controller of the Civil Region of Rabat delivered to the Department of the Interior.<sup>14</sup>

This document confirms that the PI was the most influential political force and was highly organized. Its followers were divided into *militants* (those who dedicated their lives to the party were few: the treasurer secretaries, cell lecturers, students and teachers), *members* (who took part in meetings, obeyed party discipline, paid dues) and *sympathizers* (the base – middle class, merchants, functionaries, who were content to help financially, sometimes with important sums – and to follow directives: days of mourning, fasting, closing of shops). The Controller estimated the approximate total, throughout the country, to be 679 militants, 6,565 members, 13,600 sympathizers.

This intelligence document especially calls attention to the quality of action by the PI, the propaganda of which had penetrated every milieu. Different sectors of activity are identified, especially education<sup>15</sup> and its complements – sports (the PI had founded many football, boxing, cycling, athletics and basketball clubs), scouting (Paye 1938), student associations, theatre groups. The document also informs of Istiqlal's activity among workers, thanks to the alliance with trade unions, orchestrated especially by Bū'abīd. The party also controlled certain guild and the Chambers of Commerce (Abdelkader Ben Barka 1966, p. 61). Other means of propaganda were the press *Al-'Alam* (The Banner), founded in September 1946, and *Journal de l'Istiqlal*, founded in 1951, party organs in Arabic and French (Aouchar 1990) and handing out leaflets.<sup>16</sup>

As a whole, the tools used to spread nationalist thinking turned out to be very effective: «This is certainly one of the most dangerous aspects of Istiqlal», wrote the Rabat Controller, adding: «Istiqlal propaganda is relatively well done, and knows how to adapt to its recipients. So it often exploits the religious domain, especially suitable since it largely escapes any kind of repression» (*AD, Maroc, DI. 360-364*). The themes most frequently used in Arabic languages propaganda were appeals to «Arab and Muslim brothers», to «Arab honour and Berber courage» and the use of Islamic calls («we are far from following the example of the Prophet»; «let us imitate our ancestors who, when their religion was threatened, united to

14 «Synthèse activité extrémiste, 26.6.1952», *AD, Maroc, DI. 354, 1948-52*.

15 The party made great efforts in this field, starting in 1946, especially through so-called 'free schools', institutions with a modern approach but independent from the protectorate – six just in Rabat –, attended by about 4,500 students altogether (Damis 1973, 1975; Morizot s.d.; Ma'nīnū s.d.; Marty 1925; Girardère 1938; Paye 1992, p. 404; Gerbier 1948a, 1948b).

16 At the Diplomatic Archives of Nantes, we counted six folders full of leaflets (*AD, Maroc, DI. 360, 361, 362, 363, 363 bis, 364*).

punish the outrage»; «the Islamic world must stand united»; «we must raise the standard of Islam high»; «the French are treading on your religion and on the Qur'an»; «the French wish to distract you from religious feelings», «they disdain your religious traditions», etc. [*AD, Maroc, DI. 360-364*]).

These aspects of Istiqlal strategy give an account of action by the party, totally focused on achieving independence and keeping hegemony over the territory and on the political front. However, the strategic determination – as the Controller too notes – makes use of propaganda themes which are as powerful as they are instrumental (rights, democracy, alliance with the sultan, religion, anti-colonialism)<sup>17</sup> or demagogic ('bread-justice-education'), revealing little of PI's ideological orientation. Rézette (1955, p. 277) comments that politicization of the masses was a purely tactical move: «the masses are not the source of all legitimacy for the party, but are simply the political force it needs to achieve its aims».

Further evidence of this opportunistic approach comes from the proselytizing campaign in the countryside. In order to extend its influence, the leadership of the PI (but the issue had already been touched by the National Party in the late thirties) realized that the farming population could be politicized only in its own social context, since lack of education and political training of rural inhabitants made it difficult to create and find acceptance for an organisational framework which was incompatible with what farmers knew already. Rézette (1955, p. 282) explains: «The structures familiar to rural populations with which the party must deal are those of the religious confraternity». The Civil Controller of the Rabat region, in his report on the activities of the PI, notes: «Istiqlal, after having wished, like the Sultan, to suppress them, thus seeks to exploit religious forces, especially the confraternities, but at present it is encountering great difficulties in doing so».<sup>18</sup> Though religious congregations had lost significant ground in urban contexts (Laroui 1993, pp. 126-152), they were still a deeply rooted model of association in the mentality of farmers, who welcomed the party as a new confraternity. As Rézette (1955, p. 282) notes: «The masses reply to 'Allāl al-Fāsi's theological speculations, to a doctrine of Arabism which they find hard to understand, by calling 'Allāl al-Fāsi the

17 The study by Zakia Lahlou-Alaoui (1991), though one may not share certain historical interpretations which reveal the clearly subservient character of her work, has the merit of providing a careful lexical and discursive analysis of the nationalist and colonial discourse. Her analysis shows that among the key words and slogans used in the nationalist discourse, the main theme is the claim of legitimate rights, mentioned in speeches, posters and public statements. Especially, the researcher, in the repertoire she works on, finds that 'duty' and related terms (rights, legitimacy) appears 300 times; the term 'pray' (God and equivalent words) 200 times; the term 'develop' (development, reform, democracy) 200 times.

18 «Synthèse activité extrémiste, 26.6.1952», *AD, Maroc, DI. 354, 1948-52.*, p. 16.



'sheikh'<sup>19</sup> and his partisans the 'Allaliyin' applying the terminology of the confraternities to those very people who condemn the heterodoxy of the confraternities».<sup>20</sup>

## 4 Conclusions

Right from the outset, the nationalist movement proved its ability to handle different language codes according to different needs, adapting them to the addressee. In a country which was still largely illiterate and tied – especially in the countryside – to premodern cultural models, the proselytising campaign launched in the late thirties and consolidated after World War II hinged on the religious element, the one which had most popular appeal. In this sense, the figures of al-Fāsī and of the traditionalist leaders took on major importance. Instead, direct discourse against the occupier, in Morocco or in France, was provided by Western educated members, who also managed the tools used in the struggle as well as matters more strictly related to organization: the use of telegrams to protest, delegations, public demonstrations, printing propaganda. In a similar manner, the hierarchical structure of the *Kutla* and later of Istiqlal – a model perfected when the latter turned into a mass party – was based on study of the structures of European parties, especially left-wing ones (Halstead 1969, p. 205).

During the nationalist struggle, a strategic approach prevailed over an ideological one – the latter an entirely secondary issue until independence<sup>21</sup> –, but the cultural dualism which led to associating Arabic with Islam and cultural conservatism, and French with modernity and secularization, in the end also brought out internal tensions within the Istiqlal leadership. Already during the last stages of the protectorate, political leaders with a modern French speaking background, being better suited thanks to their skills for expressing modern political thought and organizing and managing a party structure, would end up by prevailing within Istiqlal. 'Allāl al-Fāsī, formally the undisputed *za'im* (leader) of the party, preserved a charismatic role and an Islamic legitimation useful for firmly rooting the PI among the masses; this however masked his de facto politi-

19 Literally 'elder', a title attributed to prestigious personalities, including leaders of confraternities.

20 According to the scholar, if we put aside the paradox of a party turning into what it opposed, taking on the features of a confraternity gave considerable strength to the PI: the hierarchical character of a confraternity ensured absolute obedience to Istiqlal on the part of its militants.

21 No political, economic or social programme was ever proposed going beyond achievement of independence or the use of vague terms such as 'constitutional monarchy', 'democracy'.

cal marginalization within the executive, dominated by Balāfrīj and the French speakers (Rézette 1955, pp. 287, 319; Lacouture 1958; Ben Barka 1966). This situation was confirmed during the Aix-les-Bains independence conference, attended by Bū'abīd, b. Barka, al-Yazīdī and 'Abd al-Jalīl. No member with an Islamic background accompanied the delegation (Ouazani 1989; Julien 1978).

The power balance within nationalist leadership at the dawn of independence gave a prefiguration of post-independence political and social tensions and of future splits. In 1959, as 'Allāl al-Fāsī progressively gained undisputed control of Istiqlāl, turning it into a conservative party based on clans and notables (Waterbury 1975), militants of a more secular and socialist bent, guided by B. Barka (1999) and Bū'abīd (Bouabid 1996), who aimed at leading the country towards newer ideological horizons, abandoned the party and founded the National Union of Popular Forces (Bouaziz 1997; Monjib 1992). The distance between Arab and French culture also led to a national debate on school policy (De Poli 2005), revolving mainly on the use of Arabic and French; a debate that concealed a struggle between conservatives and progressives, but also marked the distance between (Arabic speaking) mass and (French speaking) elite. The use of language and the access to French teaching was thus also to define the sphere of social and political domination (Boukous 1999).

Therefore, the (often fictional) dichotomy between Arabic and French, between conservatism and progressivism, between Islam and secularism triggered during the protectorate, will prove to be a long lasting element of conflict even in independent Morocco, and an equally long lasting power tool and ideological marker.

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DI = Paris, Direction de l'Intérieur, 360/64, *Nationalisme marocain, Tracts*, 1936-5; 354, *Nationalisme marocain, Informations diverses sources gouvernementales*, 1948-52.

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## Historiography and Hagiographic Texts The Syriac Versions of Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca*

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**Abstract** The present paper is part of a larger project promoted by the University RomaTre on translations of Greek Patristic Texts (2nd-6th century CE) in the Latin and Syriac sources, between the 3rd and the 8th century CE. In this paper I give priority to the analysis of the cultural context of the Syriac monasticism without neglecting the more important aspect of evaluation. Some of these aspects are connected to the relationship between the hagiographic production and the historiographical tradition. This relationship is clarified, not only from the reconstruction of the manuscript tradition, but also from the opportunity to capture certain problems present in the preparatory phase of the heterogeneous Lausiaca material. Therefore, their manuscript tradition must be analysed for each individual case. After a brief presentation of the *status quaestionis* of the studies conducted on Palladius' text, the paper focuses on some aspects of this tradition that help us better understand the historical and cultural environment. The first aspect concerns the problem of the transmission of texts in monastic circles, the second aspect regards the original choices of Syriac translators.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 *Status Quaestionis*. – 3 The Transmission of Texts in Monastic Circles: the Construction of a Genre? – 4 The Translator's Choices: Some Examples. – 5 Conclusions.

**Keywords** Historia Lausiaca. Translations. Monastic ideology. School movement.

To my mother, Marina

### 1 Introduction

The present paper is part of a larger project promoted by the University Roma Tre in cooperation with the University of Udine, pertinent to translations of Greek Patristic Texts (second-sixth centuries CE) in Latin and Syriac sources, between the third and the eighth century CE. The project is based on the selection and analysis of parallel passages that shed light on the strategies and techniques of translations in Late Antiquity and the early Medieval period.<sup>1</sup>

1 This paper was presented at the workshop on *Intercultural Exchange in Late Antique Historiography* (Ghent, 16-18 September 2015).

Though in the article is analysed especially the cultural context of Syriac monasticism, nevertheless in it isn't neglected the relationship between the hagiographic production and the historiographical tradition. This relationship can be clarified not only by the reconstruction of the manuscript tradition, but also by the opportunity to assess certain problems present in the preparatory phase of the heterogeneous Lausiatic material.

A critical review of the Lausiatic material, emphasizing the analysis of hagiographical sources in the study of the contexts of production, is now needed in order to improve our understanding of the complex cultural phenomena that have left traces in the manuscript tradition. This is the aim of this paper. Therefore, the manuscript tradition must be analysed for each individual case. After a brief presentation of the *status quaestionis* of the studies conducted on Palladius' text, the paper will focus on particular aspects of this tradition.

The first aspect is the problem of the transmission of texts in monastic circles, characterized by an ability to absorb and assimilate many traditions for ideological and cultural reasons, and the second concerns the original choices made by the Syriac translators.

The complex manuscript tradition of the Syriac versions of Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca* (HL; fifth century CE) is a valid source for trying to understand the historical and cultural contexts in which the work flourished and was consolidated.

These texts, which circulated in several versions - Latin, Armenian, Coptic, Georgian, Arabian, Ethiopian, Old Slavonic and Sogdian - in Late Antiquity and the early Medieval period inside Eastern monasticism, have come down to us through 'Anānīshō's *Book of Paradise* of seventh century CE (CPG 6036). This work, described in Thomas Margā's *Ktābā d-Risāne* (Book of Governors) of ninth century CE (Vat. sir. 126), along with a current Syriac *Apophthegmata* (sayings and anecdotes of the leading Egyptian monks) is a rich compendium of ancient and not so ancient traditions which provides a vision of various monastic contexts.

The critical editions by E.A.W. Budge, based on Vat. sir. 165 (seventeenth century CE) and by P. Bedjan, who added Ber. 329 (Sachau 179) and Paris. sir. 317 (nineteenth century CE), provided a new studies of the manuscripts (Budge 1893; Bedjan 1901). After these studies, no critical analyses of the entire text were conducted for many years.

Recently, C. Chahine (2000, p. 460) has studied the question again, focusing on Thomas' testimony and defined it as «d'une inébranlable véracité».

The author verified the manuscript tradition of *Paradise* and examined the index of the most ancient manuscripts related to this tradition (BL, Add. 17,174 and Add. 14,853).

This is a three-year Research Project PRIN (2013-2016), entitled *Tradurre Tradire Tramadare: I Padri Greci nell'Occidente latino e nell'Oriente siriano* (Translate, Betray, Hand down: The Greek Fathers in the Latin West and in the East Syriac).

By virtue of this method of investigation, Chahine correctly focused on the testimonies attributed to Abraham Nethprāiā (sixth century CE) and John Chrysostom (second half of the fourth century CE) in the *Paradise* and overcame the limits of Bedjan's and Budge's previous research, which was based mainly on the interpretation of Vatican Library manuscripts: Vat. sir 126 and 165 (Chahine 2000, pp. 449-454).

Chahine's study has allowed us to formulate some hypotheses regarding the contexts of production and circulation of this material – that is, Western or Eastern Syriac theological and cultural contexts. Naturally, for a better understanding of this scenario we need to analyse its relationship with the Greek tradition gathered in the organic (but incomplete) edition by Dom Cuthbert Butler at the end of the nineteenth century CE (Butler 1898-1904).

## 2 *Status Quaestionis*

The most comprehensive study of the Syriac versions of *HL* is still the one conducted by R. Draguet and published in 1978 for CSCO (Draguet 1978). Nevertheless, this study has not received particular attention from scholars, especially his research of the Greek Vorlage. G. Bunge's interpretation of Coptic elements present in the Lausiac material supports Draguet's interpretation (Bunge 1990, pp. 79-127).

As for certain features present in both the Syriac and Coptic texts but absent from the Greek text, Bunge has suggested that they were eliminated from the Greek in the course of the Origenist controversies in the sixth century CE due to the presence of Evagrian elements: the theological implications of this proposal are particularly interesting (Bunge 1990, pp. 124-127).

However, Bunge's reconstruction is not convincing, as it deals mainly with R3 (the most recent texts in Draguet's subdivision)<sup>2</sup> and only marginally with R1 and R2 (the most ancient texts in Draguet's subdivision), which, according to the author, were reused by Palladius in a previous work (Bunge 1990, p. 124). In fact, Bunge does not pursue the study of the ancient testimonies of the manuscript tradition.

Previously, B. Flusin (1984, pp. 117-120) had accepted Draguet's conclusion, but without a careful analysis of the texts. Challenging Draguet's conclusion, K. Nickau (2001, pp. 131-139) correctly interprets some linguistic forms (Coptic) present in the most ancient texts (R1, R2). Nevertheless, he cannot solve all the problems related to the presence of the most ancient texts, within the Syriac versions of *HL*.

2 Draguet classified them into four different text forms called R1-R2-R3-R4 (Draguet 1978, pp. 65-70; Brock 2008, pp. 191-193).



In an article, G. Lenzi (2007, pp. 15-21) analyses the manuscript tradition of the *Paradise of the Fathers*, which preserves parts of the *HL* texts, and examines some fragments conserved in the Ambrosiana Library in Milan, attributed by the author to the Sinai sir. 46. Through an examination of fragments, Lenzi is able to identify the beginning and the end of the manuscript and to propose a persuasive new dating for it (534 CE).<sup>3</sup>

In an excellent article entitled «Saints in Syriac» S.P. Brock (2008, pp. 181-196) focuses on the current state of the studies of hagiographic texts in Syriac and in particular on the manuscript tradition of the Syriac versions of *HL*. Brock's study underlines the importance of studying all the manuscript traditions of *HL*, especially the tradition of the *Historia Monachorum* (400 CE) and the *Apophthegmata* (Brock 2008, pp. 195-196).<sup>4</sup> The author considers that this question of manuscript tradition of *HL* remains open, and hopes to renew scholars' interest in this tradition (Brock 2008, p. 196).

### 3 The Transmission of Texts in Monastic Circles: the Construction of a Genre?

Closely connected with the problem of the transmission of texts in monastic circles is the question of the Syriac 'Dādīšō 'Qatrāiā's *Commentary on Paradise of the Fathers* by 'Anānīshō'. This text is key to understanding the structure of the *Paradise of the Fathers*, because it contains a large part of the *HL*. From the confused indications given by 'Abdīshō's (died 1318) fourteenth century *Catalogue*, 'Dādīšō 'Qatrāiā appears to have flourished in the second half of the seventh century CE and wrote the commentary on the *Paradise of the Fathers* by Anānīsō (PO III/1, pp. 98-99) and other works. This text has been preserved in its entirety in a codex of BL, Add. 17,264 (n. 930 of Wright's *Catalogue*) (thirteenth century CE).

In the same collection there are at least two fragmentary manuscripts and a summary, connected to Dādīšō: Add. 17,263 (n. 931 of Wright's *Catalogue*) (thirteenth century CE); Add. 14,589 (n. 830 of Wright's *Catalogue*) (eleventh-twelfth century CE); Add. 17,175 (n. 932 of Wright's *Catalogue*) (tenth century CE).

Sims-Williams' interesting study (1994, pp. 65-84) has been followed by other general works on the subject. For example, D. Phillips of the

3 Sinai fol. 1ra = Milano f. 168vb = the beginning of the manuscript; Sinai f. 107vb = Milano fol. 169ra = the end of the manuscript (Lenzi 2007, pp. 17-21).

4 In fact, these texts circulated in several different collections, as in the case of manuscripts R3 (Brock 2008, p. 195).

University of Leuven proposes an interesting comparative method (2012, pp. 1-23). The comparison of *Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers* with the *Paradise* itself and the careful analysis of Dādīšō's other extant works – for example, the *Commentary on Abba Isaiah* – can shed light on the history and composition of its texts. The author (Phillips 2012, p. 23) states his intention as follows:

Many other avenues of research lie before us: the relationship of DOC (= *Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers*) with *Paradise* itself and the light it can shed on the history and composition of its text; the relationship between DQC (= *Commentary on Abba Isaiah*) and Dadisho's other extant works, especially DQI; the lengthy quotations of otherwise lost works such as those of Theodore of Mopsuestia; the Ethiopic version of Dadisho' and its Arabic intermediary.

We hope to shed new light on Dadisho' studies by tackling his last surviving work to be made fully accessible to the scholarly world.

Evidently, these writers from Qatar were all educated in a major school-system practised in monastic circles, which was certainly not inferior to the famous schools where many monks had been trained (Becker 2006, pp. 169-203; Bettliolo 2012, pp. 263-280).

This is the cultural background of Dādīšō's work, which also includes the *Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers*. The great many quotations from Theodore of Mopsuestia in Dādīšō's *Commentary* are very important for understanding seventh-century Eastern Syriac ascetic and mystical thinking (Phillips 2014, pp. 205-230). This information must have been available to Eastern Syriac monastic circles of the seventh century where the Lausiac material has been constantly used. In fact, in the seventh century, after Abraham of Kaškar's reform which adopted the criteria of Egyptian monasticism as the structure of the monastery (as a *Laura*) (Chialà 2005, Jullien 2008), new elements were introduced: for example, the close relationship between work and silence, and the connection between prayer, reading and liturgical practice to counter the drift towards Messalianism.

As V. Berti (2010, p. 178) says «La comunità si pensava come cenobitica e il modello, sotto il profilo degli intenti, era quello pacomiano anche se a ben vedere la comunità era organizzata [...] come una laura».

In this scenario, the typical elements of Eastern monasticism coexisted with the urban theological academies; monks who were trained in Nisibi read the Fathers of Egyptian monasticism, putting this interaction with Antiochene theology and spirituality.

These practices were not always successful, due to the inconstancy of the monks who were appointed to lead the monasteries.

However, Abraham's reform was consolidated and its norms were

observed in other contexts (Nau 1918-1919, pp. 161-172; Chialà 2005, pp. 89-93): among them, the monastery of Rabban Šabur on Mount Suster in Bet Huzaye, where Dādīšō Qatrāyā lived in solitude.

Here Dādīšō practised the *way of perfection/šelya*, a term with a polysemous value in the author's works.

In this case as well, the relationship between this term and the corresponding Greek term highlights a complex reworking of materials and meanings in order to produce a model of perfection: *šelya*/ἡσυχία = the sublime way; ἁπλάθεια (del Rio Sanchez 2009, pp. 139-150).

What we have said so far with reference to the innovations introduced by Abraham of Kaškar and the peculiarities of Dādīšō Qatrāyā's works certainly invites reflection on the complex issue of the bonds and divisions which throughout the Syro-Oriental monastic history either brought monastic ideology and the school movement closer together or set them apart (Bettiolo 2012, pp. 268-278).

If it is true that the familiarity with the models offered by Egyptian asceticism has become a topos (and indeed much has been written on the subject in recent years) it is also true that in the work of the solitary monk from Qatar we can find the signs of the consolidation of an educational practice that can be attributed to both monastic ideology and the school movement.

Neither a theorist nor a mystic, Dādīšō should be regarded rather as a teacher of monks. In his works, pervaded with Evagrian spirituality and influenced by the experience of John the Solitary, we find a whole of different experiences (del Rio Sanchez, pp. 143-146). But it is not a random or chaotic conglomerate; on the contrary, with considerable critical intelligence the author presents the various elements of his reflection gained through reading the Scriptures and the authors who, in part, were witnesses: Ephrem, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Evagrius and Theodore of Mopsuestia are widely cited as the latest studies by D. Phillips show (Phillips 2012, 2014).

But there is more. The hypothesis of the consolidation of a certain monastic-scholastic practice in Dādīšō's work is confirmed by the valorisation of the whole tradition among the cycle of Mar Eugenius, an alleged disciple of Pachomius, and the establishment of Greek-Egyptian monasticism in Mesopotamia (Berti 2010, pp. 161-164).

This very controversial hagiographic cycle may have found its historical foundation in Thomas of Margā's *Monastic History* which speaks of Greek exiles during the time of Valens (364-368). This cycle was absent from the monastic reflection of Eastern Christianity before Dādīšō (Berti 2010, p. 162). Moreover, Dādīšō also used the debate on corruption of monastic life towards the end of the seventh century CE as a teaching.

Dādīšō, then, established the monastic tradition of Egyptian origin through a meticulous elaboration of materials related to the exploits of the Desert Fathers.

This editorial technique was not uncommon in the Syro-Oriental monas-

tic context of the seventh century. In fact, Thomas of Margā, in the section that he dedicates to Anānīšō in the *Book of Governors* (II, XI) (Budge 1893, 1, pp. 79-80; 2 [Eng. Transl.], pp. 177-178), among other information, mentions a piece of writing that stood over the monk's cell door (Budge preferred to translate «upon the walls of his cell») along with other 'annotations' or 'clarifications' (Budge preferred the translation «definitions» and «divisions»); I prefer 'annotations' or 'clarifications', terms related to the concept of 'discernment', which validates the presence of a mystical thinking) that were found inside.

This may have been either preparatory material for the *Paradise of the Fathers* or a series of sayings/anecdotes which the other monks, who shared the experience of solitary life with him, may have asked him to gather together in a systematic collection. This second hypothesis appears to be more plausible and, if demonstrated, might prove the presence and consolidation of specific publishing techniques in Syro-Oriental monastic circles in the seventh century (Phillips 2012, 2014).

#### 4 The Translator's Choices: Some Examples

I will now adopt a different argument to certify some characteristics of the Lausiatic material. I aim to analyse parallel passages drawn from two traditions (Greek and Syriac) in order to identify genuine Syriac variants that might indicate an intentional choice on the part of the translator, and not a random one. I will start from the edition by Draguet (1978) which divided the manuscript tradition of the Syriac versions of *HL* into two sections: SoPa (= *Sources du Paradis*, sixth century CE) and Pa (= *Tradition du Paradis*, seventh century CE). The manuscripts SoPa, are representative of more ancient testimonies (Draguet 1978, pp. 17-44); the manuscripts Pa, retain several Egyptian monastic texts (Draguet 1978, pp. 44-113).

R1 and R2, the most ancient texts, are of particular interest and neither contains the *letter* of Lausus and they are not as complete as *HL* (Draguet 1978, pp. 76-83; Brock 2008, p. 194). In fact, these texts must be properly attributed to their authors<sup>5</sup> (Brock 2008, p. 195) and must be identified in their context of production and circulation as well as in relation to other possible translations (Coptic and Latin, but also Armenian and Ethiopian). In the case of *HL* it is also necessary to identify the real addressee of the work (Brock 2008, p. 194).<sup>6</sup>

5 Hieronimus or Rufinus? The debate among scholars is still open.

6 Lausus or Publicola? According to Brock's opinion, Publicola, the son of Melania the Elder, «would be an eminently appropriate person to whom a work on the Egyptian monks» (Brock 2008, p. 194).

Draguet described the general subdivision of *HL*'s manuscript tradition as follows

Nous désignons par SoPa (= Sources du Paradis) toute la tradition du Vie s., par opposition à MssPa tradition du Paradis VIIe s. Le sigle SoPa comporte une part de convention, car le a du graphique, - en fait la recension R1 - n'apparaît pas dans le Paradis; elle se justifie pour deux raisons: outre que, par sa date (Vie s.), R1 aurait pu parvenir à Anan Isho, le Paradis a remployé R2, très voisin de R1, les deux formes R1 et R2 dérivant en parallèle d'un R1/R2 dont le caractère linguistique est très particulier. [...]

Dans l'expression SoPa, l'élément So (= Source) recouvre donc à la fois les sources réelles du Paradis et celles que l'on peut qualifier de potentielles. (Draguet 1978, p. 15)

The author explains the relationship between R1 and R2 and this point may shed light on the original context of the texts and the various historical and theological implications. As we have seen, even modern authors have done this, superficially, with some exceptions. Bunge and Nickau, for example, analysed the particular linguistic forms in the most ancient texts R1/R2 (Bunge 1990, Nickau 2001), and above all, Lenzi's work on the fragments of the Ambrosiana manuscripts identified significant variants in the collections and correctly interpreted the gaps in the texts. Lenzi also studied the Syriac fragments comparing them with the Greek tradition and has highlighted differences and similarities (Lenzi 2007).

Therefore, the complex manuscript tradition of the Syriac versions of Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca* still awaits study.

Now I want to provide some examples of interpretation of the Syriac text in relation to the Greek reference text. The edition of the Greek text of *HL*, published by Butler, remains extremely important for the comparison of the information on the manuscript tradition of the text. On the basis of Butler's edition there are two versions of *HL*, a short one (G) and a long one (B) (Butler 1898, p. 77). The shorter version is very similar to the original text, while the longer one is the result of the merge with the *Historia Monachorum*. The version B was translated by Rufinus and was written after the *HL*.

The chapter subdivision that I use in this paper is based on the one proposed by Butler and Draguet in their editions (Butler 1898; Draguet 1978). However it does not correspond to any internal subdivision in the manuscript that contains the most ancient text G (twelfth century CE). According to Draguet, R1 and R2 reflect a lost form of Greek, more ancient than the ones found in manuscripts G and B (Draguet 1978, pp. 5-14). In any case, R3 and R4, which translate G and B respectively, also lend themselves to interesting interpretations.

However, the chronological subdivision proposed by Draguet remains a valid point of reference.

In accordance with the author's subdivision, I have chosen two passages concerning holy women. The passages deal with similar topics but are substantially different because they come from two Syriac manuscript traditions, but are not devoid of originality.

The first case (SoPa = text form R3 c. 41A) is a short story about female types common in Christian circles in Late Antiquity (Draguet 1978, pp. 289-290, French translation 1978, p. 192) whereas the second case (Pa = text form R4 c. 61) concerns the short narration of Melania the Younger's *Life*. This is a famous text (Draguet 1978, pp. 335-338, French translation 1978, pp. 217-219), much studied in the Greek and Latin versions as an important source for the history of Late Antiquity.

The first example is reconstructed through a group of manuscript sources indicated by Draguet with letters *CHTB*, within the materials of R3 (SoPa, Pa1).<sup>7</sup> The chapter is preserved in the manuscript BL, Add. 17,173 in Estrangelo on parchment and dated to the sixth or seventh century CE. The codex (BL, Add. 12,173) is divided into two parts = ff. 2-117 and ff. 118-181, and the whole text was composed by the same author.

The scribe may have read the two parts in two separate codices and may have joined them later, inserting the Lausiac material. I am interested in the second part of the codex which contains chapter 41A (ff.126vb-127va). This part is characterized by the presence of Lausiac material and some extracts from the *Apophthegmata*.

According to the Greek text G (short) and a small group of Greek Mss B (long) the Syriac version SoPa gives only a brief introduction on the «Holy Women» (see Draguet 1978, p. 289). This has been interpreted as being the unintended result of the translator's work. However, the short story can be read independently from the Greek text (see also Rapp 1998, pp. 431-448).

In fact, although the model of the manly woman belongs to the whole ascetic experience, in the case of the Syriac text it is inserted in a religious and spiritual context which is more fluid and heterogeneous than the Greek models and ascetic practices. The Syriac text highlights a context where the intervention of God's grace to support women's struggles to fight like men (Gr.), is the result of instinctive willpower (Syr.) and the practice of virtue (Gr.) is transformed into an innate excellence (Syr.)

The use of short stories in the Syriac versions of *HL* reflects the particular approach of the Syriac translator who is inclined to propose some selected examples and certifies the originality of his choice (Draguet 1978, p. 290; Mohrmann, Bartelink 1985, pp. 210-211; Rapp 1998, pp. 431-448).

<sup>7</sup> This manuscript tradition has been fully reported by Draguet (1978, pp. 21-44).

The Syriac version of the *Life* of Melania the Younger is in a codex dating from the ninth-tenth century CE. The codex is a part of the main group of codices related to the Syriac *Paradise* and contains many parts of the Lausiac materials along with the *Apophthegmata* (Pa/R4). Naturally this text deserves to be studied in depth because it can be compared with the Greek texts of the *Life* of Melania the Younger (VG).<sup>8</sup>

Briefly, in this case it is interesting to note some variants made in the Syriac version which can be attributed to the differences in cultural context with respect to the Greek. An example is the presence of Biblical quotations that the Syriac translator cites directly, unlike the Greek text of *HL* and the *VG*.<sup>9</sup> Probably, the Syriac translator used the text of the Syriac Bible, which was more familiar to him and his readers.

Another important aspect is the maternity of Melania: both versions, Syriac and Greek remember the double maternity of Melania as the cause of her subsequent chastity.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, in Greek versions of the *Life* the woman's attitude seems to be inspired by a sense of liberation, reflecting a long tradition on maternity typical of the Christian West (Duby, Perrot 1990; Ales Bello 2004; Corsi 2004; Osiek, Macdonald, Tulloch 2007). In the Syriac text, however, this attitude appears blurred: the death of children and the pain of this loss become the main causes of the radical choice taken by the holy woman.

On the contrary, the different number of children reported by the sources (*HL* and *VG*), may be the result of a copyist's mistake. The processing of materials by the Syriac translators in monastic circles was inspired by original choices and followed specific, established translation techniques. Certainly, there are important differences with respect to the Greek text that help us understand the Syriac text. Other aspects, of course, will be brought to light after a thorough study of the text.

## 5 Conclusions

With these brief examples I have tried to demonstrate the need to carry out further research into a set of materials which constitute a remarkable testimony of the cultural monastic context of Christian Syria and Persia.

A close comparison between the Syriac translations and the Greek text will allow us broaden our understanding of the specific historical and cultural scenario of the Syriac translations and will shed light on the strategies and techniques of translations used in Late Antiquity and the early Medieval period.

8 The reference translation is Mohrmann, Bartelink 1985, pp. 264-269.

9 *Koran* 7,16. Syr. lin. 20; Gr. 61, 3 (Draguet 1978, p. 336; Mohrmann, Bartelink 1985, p. 266).

10 Syr. lin. 5; Gr. 61, 2 (Draguet 1978, p. 336; Mohrmann, Bartelink 1985, p. 264).

The study should not be limited to the search for the original Greek Vorlage of the different oriental versions, which is a recurrent pattern in philological studies. Through a textual analysis and the identification of Syriac variants, the aim of this research is to investigate the contexts of production of Syriac traditions and to decipher the message and choices of the translator inside a precise theological, ideological and cultural context, as well as to explore the relationship between Greek, Coptic and Syriac monastic ideals.

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## Il lessico sanscrito dell'amore (*śṛṅgāra rasa*) nella *Satasāi* di Bihārī Lāla Caube

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**Abstract** The *Satasāi* of Bihārī Lāla Caube is an anthology of seven hundred *dohās* and some *sorṭhās*, independent stanzas of two rhythmical lines, composed at Amber court during the seventeenth century. Since the beginning, it was valued a masterpiece of *brajabhāṣā* poetry. For its elegant style, the profusion of rhetorical figures and the profound poetic sensitivity the *Satasāi* is considered as a piece of Indian classical literature, *kāvya*, and a significant text of *rīti* literary tendency, the so-called 'Indian Mannerism'. The language of the *Satasāi* includes a great number of words of Sanskrit origin, along with terms from Persian, Arabic and Vernaculars from northern India. Numerous Sanskrit words express the *śṛṅgāra rasa*, affection and passion between lovers. The forms (*tatsama* or *tadbhava*), the meanings and the cultural connotations of these terms are herein thoroughly investigated.

**Sommario** 1 *Śṛṅgāra*. – 2 *Rasa*. – 3 *Sneha*. – 4 *Rati*. – 5 *Prema*. – 6 *Kāma*. – 7 *Anurāga*. – 8 *Hita*. – 9 *Citta*, *hiya*, *ura*. – 10 *Lagana*. – 11 *Prīti*. – 12 *Surata*. – 13 *Kāmanā*. – 14 *Ruci*. – 15 *Māna*. – 16 *Viraha*. – 17 *Vinoda*.

**Keywords** Brajabhāṣā poetry. Indian Mannerism. *Śṛṅgāra rasa*.

La *Satasāi* è una raccolta di circa settecento distici composti dal poeta Bihārī Lāla Caube nel XVII secolo d.C.<sup>1</sup> Ritenuta un capolavoro della poesia di corte in lingua *brajabhāṣā*, essa è la sola opera attribuita a Bihārī (1595-1664), un *brāhmaṇa* originario dell'India centrale il quale partecipò alla vita culturale di alcune tra le più raffinate corti indiane dell'epoca. La tradizione vuole che in occasione di un *darbāra* indetto dall'imperatore mughal Shāh Jahān, il poeta avesse incontrato colui che sarebbe divenuto il suo patrono, Jaya Siṅgh Mīrzā (1617/1625?-1667), re del potente clan dei *rājapūta kachavāhā*. Il sovrano lo avrebbe invitato a risiedere presso la sua corte ad Amber dove il poeta avrebbe composto la *Satasāi*.<sup>2</sup>

1 I distici sono principalmente *dohā*; una decina sono *sorṭhā*; *dohā* e *sorṭhā* sono strofe composte di due versi in rima. Esse sono indipendenti (*muktaka*) e dunque concluse in se stesse. Il titolo dell'opera rivela l'appartenenza al genere dell'antologia in settecento strofe (*saptaśati* in sanscrito, *satasāi* in *brajabhāṣā*).

2 Bihārī Lāla Caube è conosciuto come Bihārī o Bihārī Lāla. Pochissimi sono i dati certi sulla vita e le vicissitudini personali del poeta. Egli nacque a Gwalior, trascorse l'infanzia

Non sono state riconosciute altre opere attribuibili a Bihārī. Tuttavia la maturità artistica della *Satasāī* induce a ritenere che il poeta abbia composto altri testi letterari in seguito andati perduti: la ricercata scelta lessicale, la perfezione stilistica, la selezione accurata dei temi, delle immagini, delle situazioni e dei contenuti tradiscono, infatti, una profonda conoscenza delle teorie estetiche dell'epoca e una notevole pratica letteraria.

Il tema principale della raccolta è l'amore (*śṛṅgāra*) il quale è uno dei *rasa* definiti dalla teoria estetica classica. Il termine *rasa* significa letteralmente 'succo', 'liquido', 'sapore' e quindi, in un certo senso, 'sentimento';<sup>3</sup> esso si basa a sua volta sul rispettivo 'stato emozionale' (*bhava*).<sup>4</sup> I retori classificarono in modo sempre più dettagliato i concetti di *bhava*, di *rasa*, di protagonista maschile (*nāyaka*) e femminile (*nāyikā*) e altri elementi fondanti dell'opera d'arte letteraria. Nel IX secolo d.C. il pensatore Ānandavardhana applicò il concetto di *rasa* all'intera letteratura anziché al solo teatro e lo elevò al livello di specie più importante di *dhvani*, il significato poetico esclusivo. Qualche secolo dopo, il filosofo Abhinavagupta formulò una teoria generale secondo la quale il *rasa* non sarebbe soltanto il significato poetico fondamentale, bensì l'anima stessa della poesia, ciò che in realtà risuona nella risonanza e, in definitiva, lo stato in cui l'opera d'arte eleva l'ascoltatore o lo spettatore. I concetti di *dhvani* e di *rasa* diventeranno normativi per tutta la letteratura indiana dall'epoca di Anandavardhana e di Abhinavagupta fino agli inizi del XX secolo.

Nella *Satasāī* l'amore è illustrato e presentato sotto innumerevoli sfaccettature. Bihārī attinge all'enorme serbatoio di letteratura d'arte dell'India classica (*kāvya*), si esprime secondo lo stile letterario manierista delle opere *rīti* composte in quel periodo e, nel contempo, si ispira alle tematiche culturali, sociali e religiose dell'epoca.<sup>5</sup> Anche per queste ragioni, l'espressione dell'amore si serve di vocaboli principalmente di origine sanscrita e di innumerevoli lemmi provenienti dalle lingue araba e persiana e dagli idiomi vernacolari dell'India settentrionale.

nel Bundelkhand dove fu accolto alla corte dei sovrani Bundela di Orchha; si trasferì a Mathura e frequentò la corte dell'imperatore Shāh Jahān ad Agra; ebbe contatti anche con i re di Jodhpur e Bundi. Cfr. Pāmḍeya 2000, pp. 31-42; Lāla Bhāgavan Dina 2010, pp. 1-2; Nagendra 1973, pp. 386-392; McGregor 1984, pp. 173-174; Grierson 1896, pp. 4-6.

**3** Il concetto appare per la prima volta nel *Nāṭyaśāstra* dove designa gli otto 'sentimenti' che le diverse scene di un dramma possono destare e gli spettatori 'gustare'. Il *Nāṭyaśāstra*, il cui nucleo originale risale al I-II secolo d.C., si occupa di teatro, ma i suoi assiomi sono ritenuti validi anche per tutta la letteratura classica. I *rasa* considerati dal *Nāṭyaśāstra* sono l'amore, l'ilarità, la tristezza, il furore, l'eroismo, il terrore, il disgusto e il meraviglioso. Abhinavagupta introduce un nono *rasa*, *śānti* cioè la pace, la quiete interiore considerandolo il *rasa* più elevato.

**4** Per esempio a fondamento del *rasa* dell'eroismo vi è il coraggio.

**5** Per quanto riguarda lo sviluppo e il contenuto del *kāvya* e anche per i concetti di *bhava*, *rasa* e *dhvani* cfr. Boccali, Piano, Sani 2004; sulla centralità della corrente *rīti* nell'India settentrionale tra i secoli XV e XIX cfr. Busch 2011.

L'amore, nelle sue due forme principali di unione e separazione, è descritto in modo molto accurato tramite una grande varietà di stilemi. In Bihārī ritroviamo le descrizioni raffinate e sensuali caratteristiche del *kāvya* e i motivi della passione erotica come enunciati dalla corrente *rīti*. Il poeta dipinge scene di delicato amore romantico, ma anche dell'amplesso consumato con arte, dell'incontro ma anche della lontananza, dell'infedeltà del volubile amante ma anche dell'intima dedizione della giovane innamorata. Nei quadretti – dalla natura di elaborate miniature – sono soprattutto i protagonisti maschili a tradire gli affetti dell'amante; l'ira e l'indignazione della donna ingannata e i segni rivelatori del tradimento hanno ispirato innumerevoli strofe.<sup>6</sup> Ancor più frequente è tuttavia la figura della *parakīyā nāyikā*, la moglie di un altro uomo, la quale tradisce il legittimo consorte. L'illegittimità degli amori, tematica molto cara alla letteratura indiana, crea un ampio spazio di risonanza per il sentimento, lo libera dagli stretti vincoli delle regole castali e religiose e lo pone in un ambiente ideale che sfugge alle limitazioni dello spazio e del tempo e in cui gli affetti e le passioni stesse diventano i veri protagonisti.

I *dohā* esemplificano molti tipi delle *nāyikā* e dei *nāyaka* stabiliti dai canoni letterari del *kāvya* e sviluppati con profusione dal *rīti*. Nella *Satasāī* gli archetipi del *nāyaka* e della *nāyikā* sono la coppia divina Kṛṣṇa e Rādhā: numerosissime strofe rimandano al dio nella sua forma di Gopāla,<sup>7</sup> di guardiano delle vacche nei sacri boschetti del Braj, mentre si diletta con la pastorella prediletta Rādhā in un ambiente bucolico.<sup>8</sup> Nonostante i paradigmi siano facilmente riconoscibili, l'identità dei singoli amanti è in

6 Numerosi *dohā* descrivono l'amata risentita per l'infedeltà vera o presunta dell'amante. Il tradimento è uno dei motivi ricorrenti della letteratura classica indiana.

7 Un altro epiteto molto frequente del dio è Mohana 'colui che ammalia', definizione impiegata dal poeta nel trattare i temi della fascinazione e della seduzione.

8 Nei *dohā* che vedono protagonisti Kṛṣṇa e Rādhā, il tema dell'amore si fonde in modo inestricabile con quello della devozione (*bhakti*). Anche in numerose altre strofe gli elementi descritti appartengono all'ambito della *bhakti*: il devoto vorrebbe stare per sempre alla corte del suo dio, si ritiene un grande peccatore e confida nella grazia divina. La divinità d'elezione sembra essere Kṛṣṇa invocato soprattutto con i nomi Hari e Gopāla. Poiché il verso iniziale della *Satasāī* è rivolto a Rādhā, si può supporre che Bihārī fosse particolarmente devoto anche al pater del dio; il *dohā* in questione è il seguente: «Rimuovi gli ostacoli della mia esistenza, o Rādhā, tu cortese e pura | con la visione fugace del tuo corpo ricolmi Śyāma di delizia» (cfr. Ratnākara 2009, p. 20; Bhāṭī 1969, p. 17). È difficile stabilire se nella *Satasāī* i riferimenti alla divinità siano un anelito spontaneo verso il divino oppure una mera convenzione letteraria: la delicatezza con cui i temi sono trattati suscita il sentimento della devozione, la forma stilistica e la lingua elaborata rende inclini a giudicarlo un semplice uso letterario. La *Satasāī* si presenta dunque come un esempio di continuità tra l'espressione di principi religiosi e quella di convenzioni letterarie; nell'opera una tale penetrazione sembra caratterizzata da un sentire religioso connaturato alla persona di Bihārī e all'ambiente culturale e sociale di provenienza (cfr. Snell 1994). Per una disamina dei *dohā* legati espressamente alla *bhakti*, si veda Mishra 1978.

genere difficile da stabilire. L'indefinitezza nel delineare l'individualità dei protagonisti risponde a precisi criteri letterari e, inoltre, permette al poeta di collocare l'amore in un ambiente sublimato dove null'altro esiste al di fuori dell'amore stesso. Tranne le strofe in cui appaiono epiteti di Kṛṣṇa, di Rādhā o di un dio (Rāma o Śiva), il protagonista maschile è genericamente chiamato signore e marito (*nātha*, *īśa*, ecc.) caro, amato, diletto (*lāla*, *lalan*, *pyāra*, ecc.) mentre la protagonista femminile è chiamata diletta, cara (*bāla*, *pyārī*, *lalanā*, ecc.).<sup>9</sup> Si menziona talora una sposa novella e in alcune occasioni sono presenti delle 'altre mogli' o concubine (*sauta*). Talora gli amanti si parlano solo attraverso lo sguardo perché sono circondati dai *gurujana* cioè dagli altri membri della famiglia o da persone in presenza delle quali, per rispetto, essi devono mantenere un comportamento discreto.

Un numero elevato di attributi contribuisce a definire l'amore: la bellezza del corpo talora illustrata attraverso minuti particolari,<sup>10</sup> gli elementi decorativi,<sup>11</sup> la gestualità degli amanti,<sup>12</sup> i luoghi e i mezzi dell'incontro,<sup>13</sup> la caratterizzazione delle stagioni.<sup>14</sup> Generalmente non si assiste a una vera e propria descrizione di questi dati: essi sono piuttosto appena accennati perché lo scopo è suggerire stati d'animo, pensieri e riflessioni che sarà il fruitore stesso della poesia a dover cogliere e stabilire con chiarezza.

L'amore è celebrato principalmente attraverso la felice unione degli amanti o nella loro triste separazione. Tra i *tópoi* più frequenti nella *Satasai*

9 In genere è la protagonista femminile a parlare dell'amato, a invocarlo; raramente avviene il contrario.

10 La bellezza e lo splendore della donna sono delineati attraverso la minuziosa descrizione di elementi quali il viso, gli occhi, le sopracciglia, la bocca, il naso, la fronte, il mento, i seni, i fianchi, i piedi, i talloni. In conformità con i canoni letterari classici, i capelli sono neri e lucenti, gli occhi di gazzella lanciano languidi sguardi, le guance sono delicate, il viso è simile alla luna, i fianchi sono sottili e flessuosi, i talloni rosei e soffici, ecc.

11 La lacca per i piedi, il nerofumo, gli ornamenti per piedi, mani e naso, cavigliere, bracciali, collane, decorazioni e gioielli in mezzo alla fronte, ghirlande di fiori, ecc.

12 I gesti e i movimenti del corpo suggeriscono un intimo pensiero del protagonista, trasmettono stati d'animo o addirittura il rapido susseguirsi di svariate emozioni.

13 I luoghi dell'appuntamento sono i tetti, i vicoli, le verande in mezzo alla folla o ai parenti. Gli amanti si vedono durante la festività religiosa di Holī, in occasione di concerti o di riunioni dei *gurujana*. In genere gli incontri avvengono all'interno di una dimora, più raramente in luoghi aperti, in mezzo alla natura. Si può supporre che trattandosi di un genere di letteratura rivolta ad un pubblico che dimorava nelle corti, il poeta avesse preferito ambientare le strofe della *Satasai* soprattutto in luoghi chiusi che ricordavano per l'appunto la vita di palazzo.

14 Il caldo torrido dell'estate rappresenta il dolore per la separazione; la primavera con la sua vivacità simboleggia le gioie dell'unione; l'autunno illuminato da una splendida luna dal nitido chiarore risveglia la passione; il freddo eccessivo dell'inverno esalta il calore che pervade il corpo dell'amata afflitta dalla lontananza dal suo diletto.

troviamo lo scambio di occhiate furtive, preludio dell'incontro imminente, oppure l'uscita notturna della giovane innamorata che si reca segretamente presso l'alcova dell'amato. Gli elementi che definiscono l'amore in lontananza sono tratti dai registri classici: il corpo si fa esile per la sofferenza, un intollerabile calore pervade e consuma l'eroina senza che le fredde temperature dell'inverno, l'acqua di rose, le vesti bagnate riescano a smorzarlo, le amiche temono per la vita stessa della protagonista, scorrono fiumi di lacrime. Intervengono il ricordo, la descrizione delle virtù dell'amato, l'inquietudine per il distacco. Le descrizioni denotano talora una grande modernità, come nel caso in cui è detto che la morte neppure indossando gli occhiali riuscirebbe a ghermire la poveretta, tanto il suo corpo si è fatto esile. A delineare le passioni, i teneri sentimenti e i turbamenti intervengono anche numerosi elementi che rivelano il contesto culturale dell'epoca. Ad esempio vi sono numerose strofe ispirate alla scienza astronomica e astrologica (*jyotiṣa*), altre alla musica classica (*śāstrīya saṅgīta*), alcune utilizzano nozioni di architettura. La *Satasāī* si rivolgeva al pubblico colto e raffinato della corte il quale era in grado non solo di cogliere le finezze della forma e le molteplici accezioni di uno stesso lemma, ma anche di apprezzare le allusioni alle numerose arti che fiorivano presso le corti imperiali e regali dell'epoca e, in generale, i riferimenti alla vita di quel periodo.<sup>15</sup>

Nella *Satasāī* i sostantivi sanscriti e i loro derivati impiegati per indicare l'amore sono molto numerosi. Nel presente studio prenderemo in considerazione solamente i nomi che si riferiscono direttamente al sentimento d'amore; non analizzeremo i vocaboli che concorrono a suscitare tale sentimento quali le descrizioni di attributi fisici, di stati d'animo, delle sei stagioni (*ṣad-ṛtu*) né le forme verbali e aggettivali che esprimono questo *rasa*; una simile indagine non potrebbe essere contenuta entro i limiti di un articolo in quanto nella *Satasāī* l'impiego di vocaboli provenienti dal sanscrito è, per la natura e l'origine della lingua *brajabhāṣā* stessa, molto ampio e articolato (cfr. Snell 1991).

Tra i sostantivi principali troviamo *śṛṅgāra*, *rasa*, *sneha*, *rati*, *prema*, *kāma*, *anurāga*, *hita*, *citta*, *lagna*, *prīti*, *surata*, *kāmanā*, *ruci*, *māna*, *viraha*, *vinoda*. Segue ora una descrizione del significato e dell'impiego di questi termini che non ha la pretesa di essere esaustiva; inoltre la classificazione dei vocaboli non può essere concepita in modo rigido per la flessibilità nell'impiego degli stessi secondo le loro diverse accezioni. A fini esemplificativi, per ogni vocabolo proponiamo la traduzione in italiano di uno o più *dohā*.<sup>16</sup>

15 Non si tratta tuttavia dell'esistenza comune, della vita di tutti i giorni bensì di una realtà concepita secondo modelli ideali di fruizione del bello.

16 La numerazione dei *dohā* è quella stabilita nell'edizione di Ratnākara 2009 e ripresa nel commentario di Bhāṭī 1969. Vi sono altre collezioni pregevoli per l'indagine critica o filologica: Grierson 1896; Lāla Bhagavānadīna 'Dīna' 1926; Miśra 1970; Mālavīya 2008; Pāṇḍeya 2000. Considerazioni dettagliate sulle opere summenzionate si possono trovare



## 1 Śṛṅgāra

Śṛṅgāra è il termine impiegato per definire il *rasa* stesso dell'amore. Questo sostantivo sanscrito maschile esprime l'amore, la passione erotica, il desiderio, il godimento. Può essere di due tipi: *sambhoga* (reciproco appagamento) e *vipralambha* (fallimento, disillusione). Nei *dohā* indica l'affetto unito all'attrazione ed è menzionato nella forma del *tadbhava simgāra*:

46. Pregni del sentimento d'amore [*rasa simgāra*] rivaleggiano con i loti e anche senza applicarvi il nerofumo umiliano le cutrettole,<sup>17</sup> gli occhi tuoi.<sup>18</sup>

## 2 Rasa

Un termine che si presta a tratteggiare le innumerevoli sfumature del sentimento d'amore è *rasa* con i suoi derivati. Il sostantivo maschile *rasa* ha molteplici significati i quali sono tutti legati all'atto di gustare, assaporare, percepire qualche cosa. *Rasa* è, infatti, il succo delle piante (tra cui la canna da zucchero) e dei frutti, un'essenza liquida, l'acqua, una bevanda, il burro fuso, uno sciroppo, il nettare, ecc. fino ad arrivare a significare l'affetto, il desiderio, l'attrazione, una condizione di delizia, il subire un fascino, ecc. Il nome primitivo *rasa* e i suoi numerosi derivati sono impiegati in molti distici.

nella nostra tesi di dottorato inedita *La Satasāi di Bihārī Lāla Caube (1595-1663), un'opera del rītikāla in lingua brajabhāṣā*, Venezia 2015 (disponibile all'indirizzo <http://dSPACE.unive.it/handle/10579/6507>). La traduzione in italiano dei *dohā* è stata realizzata da noi stessi a partire dalle strofe originali in lingua *brajabhāṣā* pubblicate nella raccolta di Bhāṭī 1969. La resa in italiano è stata effettuata con l'ausilio di vari dizionari, alcuni dei quali menzionati nella bibliografia generale, e attraverso il raffronto con edizioni critiche, commentari e raccolte (tutti redatti in lingua *hindī* o *brajabhāṣā*) in parte anch'essi riportati alla fine di questo articolo. Una bibliografia esaustiva è reperibile all'interno della tesi di dottorato ora menzionata. Le strofe non sono state riportate nella versione originale in *brajabhāṣā* per lasciar spazio a una articolata esposizione del tema trattato nel presente articolo, esemplificazione che ha dovuto comunque subire una forte riduzione data l'ampiezza dell'uso del lessico sanscrito dell'amore nell'opera originale. La disparità nel numero delle strofe riportate per illustrare l'impiego dei vari lemmi è da imputarsi all'opera originale. Infatti essa non fu uno dei 'libro di metodo' (*rīti-grantha*) che definivano e illustravano tutti i vari principi della retorica classica tanto in voga durante il periodo *rīti*, bensì un'antologia di strofe sciolte, indipendenti (*muktaka*) composte al fine di suscitare nell'ascoltatore prima e nel lettore poi l'apprezzamento dell'arte poetica e quindi la fruizione dell'esperienza estetica.

17 Il vocabolo impiegato nella strofe originale è *khaṃjana*: si tratta di cutrettole, ballerine o altri uccelli ritenuti graziosi per la loro lunga coda la quale, nella poesia, è paragonata agli occhi di una bella donna.

18 Il confronto tra gli occhi e i loti nasce dall'origine acquatica del loto il quale, rimanendo costantemente immerso nell'acqua, dovrebbe essere impregnato di *rasa* (lett. liquido, succo e per estensione sentimento, emozione) più degli occhi.

178. Cavalcando senza fine il cavallo della mente ricolma d'affetto [*sarasa*],<sup>19</sup>  
e conducendo la palla a destinazione si gioca e si vince il gioco a polo<sup>20</sup> dell'amore  
[*prema*].
197. È travolto dal tuo fascino [*rasa*]! Solo un cuore malvagio può dire che egli è  
dominato da un'altra:  
come potrebbe la lingua toccare i semi di *nīma*,<sup>21</sup> o folle, dopo aver gustato  
[i chicchi] d'uva?
452. Più la corrente del fiume del desiderio [*rasa*] traccia un solco profondo,  
più si fa saldo l'albero dell'amore nell'alveo del cuore.
514. Sono intrisi uno dell'essenza [*rasa*] dell'altro; fermi immobili, i due non si  
allontanano  
spruzzandosi di splendore dopo aver colmato con le tinte dell'amore [*prema*] le  
cannucce - gli occhi -.<sup>22</sup>
337. Anche in assenza di tenerezza [*anarasa*], o diletto [*rasika*], si gustano delizie  
[*rasu*] presso l'innamorata [*rasīlī*],  
[così] come anche nelle dure giunture è intrisa di dolcezza la canna da zucchero.<sup>23</sup>
94. Il suono della *vīṇā*,<sup>24</sup> l'appagamento della poesia, le melodie piene di emozione  
[*sarasa*], la gioia nell'unione d'amore [*rati*]  
chi vi è immerso a metà è perduto, chi vi è immerso completamente è salvo.

19 Il termine *sarasa* letteralmente significa colmo di succo, delizioso quindi anche pieno d'affetto.

20 Nella strofe è la parola di origine persiana *caugāna* a indicare il gioco a palla conosciuto come 'polo'.

21 *Nīma* è l'albero *Melia azadirachta* noto per i frutti e le foglie amare dalle notevoli proprietà medicamentose; è molto impiegato nella farmacopea tradizionale.

22 Si allude alla festività religiosa di Holī, celebrata a primavera con grande devozione nell'area del Braj, durante la quale ci si spruzzava con acqua colorata e profumata o con polveri anch'esse colorate. Holī è menzionata in molte strofe della *Satasāī*.

23 La strofe è costruita sul significato di *rasa* all'interno delle parole derivate *anarasa* 'assenza di *rasa*' (che abbiamo reso con 'assenza di dolcezza', ma il significato potrebbe anche essere 'nei momenti d'ira' o 'in un luogo spiacevole'), *rasika* 'pieno di *rasa*', gustoso, elegante, dedito a (abbiamo reso con 'diletto') e l'aggettivo *rasīlī* 'colmo di *rasa*', delizioso, affascinante, innamorato, compagno dei giochi d'amore.

24 Nella strofe originale il termine impiegato è *tantrīnāda* il quale indica semplicemente il suono (*nāda*) di un qualsiasi strumento musicale a corde. Tuttavia è implicita l'allusione alla *vīṇā* perché essa è lo strumento a corde per eccellenza della musica classica indiana. La *vīṇā* è un liuto di bambù a sette corde che presenta all'estremità una cassa di risonanza; ne esistono molte varietà.

### 3 *Sneha*

Il vocabolo che appare con maggior frequenza è certamente il sostantivo maschile *sneha* nelle varianti morfologiche *saneha* e soprattutto *neha*. Il suo uso allude a vari tipi di affetto a partire da un tenero sentimento, quale l'amicizia, per arrivare fino all'attrazione fisica. Il vocabolo è interessante perché letteralmente significa oleosità, untuosità, levigatezza e per estensione tenerezza, affetto, passione, attaccamento, amorevolezza. Alcuni *dohā* presentano giochi di parole costruiti proprio sulla doppia accezione insita nel termine.

283. Solo proteggendosi sotto vesti bagnate anche nelle notti d'inverno  
e per l'amicizia [*neha*] facendosi coraggio, le amiche le si avvicinano.<sup>25</sup>
396. Se desideri che la radiosità non diminuisca e si offuschi, o amico  
non cospargere con la polvere delle passioni il cuore che risplende di tenerezza  
[*neha*].<sup>26</sup>
123. La donna, trovato l'anello del suo bellissimo innamorato, per l'affetto [*neha*]  
novello  
lo bacia, lo guarda, se lo porta al cuore, lo indossa [e infine lo] toglie e lo tiene  
[in mano].
4. Per le pupille ancor più luminose sei annoverata come l'eccellente<sup>27</sup> tra le  
numerose [mogli]  
[perché le pupille] si son fatte gemme d'affetto [*neha*] del marito, celate dal velo  
del pudore.
284. Il maestro di danza - l'amore [*neha*] - la istruì abilmente in tutte le arti.

25 Uno dei motivi ricorrenti è l'insostenibile calore che pervade il corpo della protagonista che soffre perché è separata dall'amato. Il termine tecnico che definisce questo tipo di eroina è *proṣitapatikā nāyikā* (triste per la lontananza dall'amato).

26 Nell'originale, il termine che abbiamo reso liberamente con 'passioni' è *rājasu* il quale indica le azioni caratterizzate da *rajas*, la tendenza al movimento, all'irrequietudine, ecc. produttrici di ira, attaccamento, gelosia, ecc. Il vocabolo tradotto come 'che risplende' è l'aggettivo *cīkanaum* il quale implica l'idea di essere levigato, liscio in quanto cosperso di una sostanza oleosa. All'olio, e specialmente al burro chiarificato (*ghī*), la tradizione indiana attribuisce una valenza molto positiva: essi migliorano la qualità di ciò che ungono perché lo rendono splendente e luminoso conferendo bellezza e vigore. Si pensi ai capelli leggermente cosparsi di oli profumati: è un *topos* della letteratura classica e un'abitudine che gli indiani mantengono ancor oggi. L'olio e il burro chiarificato possiedono quindi proprietà sattviche contrapponendosi a ciò che è rajastico.

27 Il vocabolo originale è *siratāja* il quale deriva dal sostantivo persiano *sar-tāj* che indica un ornamento per il capo.

Con sensualità, infiniti passi improvvisa la migliore tra le danzatrici – la pupilla degli occhi.<sup>28</sup>

326. Il *cunari*<sup>29</sup> scuro [punteggiato] di stelle, il volto simile<sup>30</sup> alla luna.

Un forte sentimento [*neha*] mi coglie come fosse il sonno, vedendo quella donna simile alla notte.

5. Sorta è la passione [*sanehu*] nel giorno propizio in cui Saturno – il nerofumo<sup>31</sup> – [era visibile] nell'ascendente pesci<sup>32</sup> – gli occhi.

Perché, [l'affetto] non diviene il signore e gioisce dello splendido regno conquistato – l'intero corpo?<sup>33</sup>

467. [Suo marito] il padrone di casa era seduto vicino, il suo corpo accanto al mio, eppure lei mi mostrò il suo attaccamento [*neha*] chini gli occhi, mi lanciò languidi sguardi.

484. Rendendo i *muni* inebriati d'amore e ardenti di desiderio [*neha*] per una donna, si apprestano a toccare terra le nuvole cariche di pioggia copiosa.

393. Caro, [anche se] sei squisito e ben insaporito d'affetto [*saneha*]

un gusto vagamente pungente mi colpisce la bocca irritandola come [fosse] *sūrana*.<sup>34</sup>

**28** Il maestro di danza è indicato, nella strofe originale, dal termine *nāika* il quale indica un *ustāda* cioè un maestro che istruisce nelle quattro sezioni (*āṅga* nel distico originale) di questa disciplina: la danza, il canto, l'esecuzione strumentale e la capacità di rendere i *bhava*.

**29** Il *cunari* è una veste femminile (*sārī*) che è stata tinta legando la stoffa in alcuni punti; il risultato finale è un tessuto con numerose inserzioni prive di colore o poco colorate. L'effetto è quello di un cielo stellato. Questo tipo di lavorazione è ancor oggi molto comune nello stato del Rajasthan.

**30** La similitudine è espressa dal sostantivo *unahāri* il quale deriva dal sanscrito *anuhāra* che significa imitazione, somiglianza.

**31** Si tratta del *kajjala*, un cosmetico di colore nero che si applica sulle palpebre.

**32** Nella letteratura indiana classica gli occhi che mostrano la forma di pesce sono ritenuti molto affascinanti. L'eroina, applicandovi il nerofumo, rivela l'affetto che nutre in cuor suo per qualcuno; diventa allora auspicabile che la passione prenda il sopravvento e l'unione con l'amato possa compiersi.

**33** Secondo i trattati indiani di scienza astronomica-astrologica (*jyotiśa*), una persona nella cui carta natale Saturno si trova nel segno ascendente (*lagna*), cioè che sorge a est al momento della nascita, è destinata a diventare re. Numerose altre strofe della *Satasāi* contengono allusioni al *jyotiśa*; si tratta di riferimenti spesso assai complessi ma dagli esiti molto raffinati.

**34** La *sūrana* è un tubero commestibile dal sapore aspro e pungente che si può consumare solo una volta che sia stato ben cotto. L'amato, dopo aver amareggiato con un'altra donna, si reca dalla legittima consorte la quale si accorge del tradimento e lo rimprovera. La strofe è giocata sul doppio senso di *neha* (oleosità, affetto), di *salone* che significa affascinante, ma

658. Per quanto il corpo – il lume – sia bello ed elegante e dotato di buone qualità<sup>35</sup>  
tuttavia getta [intorno a sé] tanta luce quanto è l'affetto – l'olio<sup>36</sup> [che lo] colma.

Il sostantivo femminile *rati* significa piacere, godimento ed esprime la passione erotica, l'unione sessuale, i piaceri dell'amore. Nella mitologia il nome *Rati* designa una delle due mogli del dio dell'amore (l'altra è *Prīti*):

23. Ricolmi di pudore, orgoglio, indolenza, ardore, i tuoi occhi sorridono.  
L'alba rivela un'altra radiosa luce: quella dei piaceri [*rati*] assaporati nella notte.
24. Il marito le rivolse parole piene di ardore [*rati*], lei guardò l'amica sorridendo.  
Tutte le compagne, adducendo un pretesto, se ne andarono felici.

#### 4 *Rati*

*Bihārī* riesce a impiegare il termine *rati* in modo addirittura umoristico. Nella *Satasāī* sono frequenti le strofe dal contenuto o dal linguaggio ironico (cfr. Snell 1999). Nelle strofe seguenti la dedizione a una bella donna o l'appagamento dell'unione sono paragonati o ritenuti superiori alla liberazione (*mukti*) dal ciclo delle nascite e delle morti:

338. Il mignolo chiaro, l'unghia rosata e l'anellino scuro quale splendore emanano!  
Venerando per un istante questa *triveṇī*<sup>37</sup> gli occhi appagano la passione [*rati*] e  
ottengono la liberazione stessa!
76. Trasalire, eccitarsi, ridere, singhiozzare, premere, afferrarsi e stringersi:  
il piacere [*rati*] è la vera *mukti*; un altro tipo di *mukti* è solo una grande perdita.

anche salato (reso liberamente con squisito) e del verbo *paganā*, essere intriso di sciropo, ma anche essere ben condito (di olio o burro chiarificato).

35 Il termine qualità traduce la parola *guṇa* la quale significa sia qualità, sia stoppino o corda. Da ciò deriva il gioco di parole costruito sull'identificare il corpo con una lampada.

36 Qui il termine impiegato è *saneha* nella sua doppia accezione di affetto e combustibile, cioè sostanza che alimenta un fuoco.

37 La *triveṇī* è la confluenza dei fiumi Gange, Yamuna e Sarasvati. Si ritiene che il luogo sia particolarmente sacro e che un'abluzione nelle sue acque conferisca grandi meriti o benefici spirituali.

## 5 *Prema*

Frequente è il sostantivo femminile *prema* che significa amore, affetto e il quale è impiegato in numerose strofe per alludere a questo sentimento in senso generico come nei versi seguenti che descrivono la città dell'amore oppure la genuinità di un'emozione:

407. Come si può risiedere nella città dell'amore [*prema*] e sopravvivere? Non vi sono  
regole!

Là gli occhi rivaleggiano senza ragione sottomettendo il [povero] cuore!

444. I taglialegna - le persone vili - si sfinirono nel provare a tagliare con l'accetta  
- le maldicenze -  
il ramo carico di fiori dell'albero - l'amore [*prema*] - [sorto] nella cavità del cuore.

399. Senza la messaggera - la chiave di volta - nessun altro mezzo ci può unire!  
Bisognerà tuttavia rimuoverla una volta che il carico dell'amore [*prema*] sarà ben  
saldo.<sup>38</sup>

In una strofe dal felice esito devozionale, Bihārī impiega il termine *prema* per alludere non più al comune sentimento umano bensì all'amore divino:

251. Laddove cuori consacrati [a Dio],<sup>39</sup> più alti di una montagna,<sup>40</sup> sono affogati a  
migliaia  
quell'oceano d'amore [*prema*] è solo una pozza d'acqua per gli uomini dalla natura  
di animali.<sup>41</sup>

**38** Il distico evidenzia l'importanza della figura della messaggera paragonandola al *kālabūta*: il termine, di origine persiana, indica la pietra angolare o, in generale, un elemento architettonico portante che serve da sostegno a strutture sovrastanti, un elemento costitutivo di strutture murarie, ecc. Lo abbiamo reso liberamente con 'chiave di volta' perché rende l'idea dell'unione armoniosa tra i due amanti.

**39** Il termine originale che abbiamo tradotto con 'consacrato' è *rasika*, lett. 'pieno di *rasa*' cioè di amore, devozione, sentimento; si tratta quindi di cuori frementi, vibranti di devozione. Nella corrente devozionale, *bhakti*, il *rasika* è colui che assapora il gioco illusorio (*līlā*) di Dio (Bhāgavan).

**40** Nel loro slancio verso la Divinità.

**41** Vale a dire assoggettati al mondo illusorio del divenire.

## 6 *Kāma*

Il sostantivo maschile *kāma* significa desiderio, brama, piacere, oggetto d'amore. *Kāma* è la personificazione stessa del desiderio ed è quindi uno dei nomi del dio dell'amore. Nella *Satasai* il suo impiego è limitato.

495. Ha ridotto il mondo intero sotto il controllo dell'amore [*kāma*] e ha sconfitto gli  
 invincibili:  
 il mese di *agahana* non permetterà a Kusumaśara di imbracciare arco e frecce!<sup>42</sup>

170. Caparbio, con insistenza le infligge dolore giorno e notte,<sup>43</sup> il vile:  
 è divenuto malevolo, per la donna, l'impietoso dio *Kāma*!<sup>44</sup>

## 7 *Anurāga*

Il sostantivo maschile *anurāga* significa dedizione, attaccamento, affetto, amore, passione; indica anche il colore rosso e la devozione. Esprime un sentimento d'amore molto intenso. Il termine è caratteristico delle scuole devozionali *bhakta* della tradizione indiana; indica uno dei diversi tipi di adesione (*asakti*) alla Divinità. In vari *dohā* il termine mantiene questa sfumatura di significato ed è impiegato in contesti che rivelano la sua pertinenza all'ambito devozionale.

169. Per l'esser rimasto desto la notte intera, sono color cremisi come il bel loto  
 appena sbocciato  
 come fossero stati tinti dalla passione [*anurāga*] di lei, gli occhi di lui.<sup>45</sup>

42 *Agahana*, chiamato anche *mārgaśiṛṣa*, è il nono mese del calendario indù e corrisponde a novembre-dicembre. Kusumaśara è uno dei nomi del dio dell'amore (*Kāmadeva*) e indica che le sue frecce (*śara*) sono dei fiori (*kusuma*). Il freddo mese invernale di *agahana* non è favorevole agli amori - per i quali la stagione deputata è la primavera - eppure esso stesso è riuscito a dominare l'amore e a sottomettere alla forza del desiderio persino coloro che a esso sfuggivano (gli asceti, gli eremiti, ecc.). Per la giovane donna, a cui forse si rivolge colui che sta parlando, non vi è dunque scampo perché *agahana* assoggetterà anche lei alla potenza del desiderio senza che sia necessario l'intervento del dio dell'amore.

43 Nell'originale *āṭhau jāma*, gli otto *yāma* un termine sanscrito che indica le otto sezioni di una giornata computate a partire dall'alba di un giorno per arrivare a quella del giorno successivo.

44 La protagonista è una *proṣitapatikā nāyikā*.

45 Attraverso un raffinato gioco di allitterazioni e assonanze, il poeta utilizza la parola *anurāga* secondo l'origine etimologica e cioè *anu rañj* diventare rosso, essere affezionato o devoto.

288. Nel *mumha-dikhāna*, come trasportati dall'affetto [*anurāga*] per la sposa la suocera le offrì la signoria sulla casa, il marito il cuore, le altre mogli la buona sorte.<sup>46</sup>
121. Nessuno può comprendere il moto del cuore colmo di devozione [*anurāga*]: più s'immerge nel colore scuro più è fulgido.<sup>47</sup>
201. Rinuncia ai *tīrtha*,<sup>48</sup> concentrati<sup>49</sup> sullo splendore dei corpi di Hari e Rādhikā:<sup>50</sup> ogni passo sul sentiero tra i boschetti nelle foreste del Braj è [un pellegrinaggio a] Prayāg.<sup>51</sup>

## 8 Hita

In sanscrito il termine *hita* in qualità di sostantivo maschile significa amico, benefattore e come sostantivo neutro indica qualche cosa di benefico, vantaggioso o salutare; come aggettivo significa benefico, conveniente, adatto, ben disposto, affezionato, amichevole. In *brajabhāṣā* è sinonimo di beatitudine, bene, gaudium.

517. Guardandosi, mostrando l'affezione [*hita*] dei loro cuori, chini gli sguardi, il corpo bagnato tremano entrambi, ma in qualche modo il *japa*<sup>52</sup> non ha mai fine.

46 Il *mumha-dikhāna* (mostrare il volto) è la cerimonia in cui la sposa novella si presenta ai membri della nuova famiglia e riceve da loro un piccolo dono simbolico. Il *dohā* sembra sottolineare come, probabilmente, la bellezza e le virtù della giovane donna conquistarono tutti i parenti. Abbiamo tradotto con 'buona sorte' il termine *suhāga* il quale deriva dal sanscrito *saubhāgya* e in questo contesto indica la condizione felice di una moglie quando il marito è vivo. Si tratta quindi, indirettamente, di un augurio di lunga vita rivolto al marito.

47 Il colore scuro è indicato dall'aggettivo sanscrito *syāma* il quale è anche un nome del dio Kṛṣṇa. Si può immaginare che a parlare sia Rādhā, l'amante prediletta del dio: più ella è assorta in *Syāma* più il suo cuore risplende di devozione.

48 Luoghi sacri di pellegrinaggio.

49 Nell'originale troviamo *anurāgu kari* che letteralmente significa essere attratti, affezionarsi.

50 Kṛṣṇa e Rādhā.

51 Braj/Vraj è il luogo in cui si svolgono le vicende della vita di Kṛṣṇa. Prayāg è considerata la meta di pellegrinaggio per eccellenza.

52 Il *japa* è la ripetizione di un'invocazione, un nome divino ecc. normalmente eseguita con l'ausilio di un rosario. Si può immaginare che i due amanti abbiano compiuto un'abluzione nelle acque di un fiume, una piscina sacra, ecc. e in quell'occasione abbiano iniziato una recitazione al fine di trattenersi in quel luogo e poter quindi godere della vicinanza l'uno dell'altro.



380. Nel trasporto [*hita*], l'altra moglie insistette, la sottrasse al mio diletto e se ne adornò:  
dalle mie stesse mani intrecciata di perle, la collana divenne quella di Hara.<sup>53</sup>

## 9 *Citta, hiya, ura*

Vi sono vari vocaboli che indicano il cuore e la mente colti dal turbamento del sentimento amoroso, travolti dalla passione oppure semplicemente immersi in una qualche riflessione sull'amore o sulla vita in genere. Fra questi termini troviamo *cita*, un *tadbhava* dal sostantivo sanscrito *citta* (cuore, mente, ragione, intenzione, desiderio) e *hiya/hiyā* e *ura*, *tadbhava* derivati dal sostantivo neutro sanscrito *hṛdaya* (cuore, mente). I *dohā* che presentano questi due termini sono molto numerosi; ne diamo solo qualche esempio.

193. Fissata fra i tetti la fune degli sguardi, vi salgono e corrono senza timore da qua a là, come giocolieri vanno e vengono i loro due cuori [*cita*].
10. Torna ripetutamente e da lui rimane il cuore [*citu*], spezzata la cima del pudore divenuto vascello [intrapolato] nel gorgo della massa di splendore di tutte le sue membra.
281. Nello *hammām* del mio cuore [*hiya*], mi sono purificata con i tre fuochi pensando che, una volta giunto qui, ne avrebbe gioito e si sarebbe commosso, Syāma.<sup>54</sup>
175. Portando con sé la fragranza emanata dai fiori sbocciati di *navamallī*<sup>55</sup> tocca e incendia il cuore [*hiya*] di colei che è afflitta dalla separazione [*viraha*] il vento che soffia quando piove.

53 Hara, il dio Śiva, porta intorno al collo un serpente a guisa di collana.

54 *Hammām* è una parola araba che indica il bagno in cui ci si purifica attraverso la sudorazione per mezzo del vapore e attraverso il lavaggio con acqua. Il calore proviene dal pavimento, dal soffitto e dalle pareti. Il triplice fuoco (*traya-tāpa*) menzionato nella strofe si riferisce a tre forme di calore ascetico, *ādhibhautika*, *ādhidāivika* e *ādhyātmika* (mondano, divino e spirituale) attraverso cui un individuo può purificarsi e quindi liberarsi dai legami che lo tengono avvinto alla manifestazione. *Traya-tāpa* può anche essere inteso come il triplice calore amoroso *madana*, *uddīpana* e *viraha*; il *dohā* sarebbe allora da ritenersi pronunciato da Rādhā. Abbiamo tradotto con 'purificare' il verbo *tapanā* che significa letteralmente 'essere scaldato', 'bruciare di pena o dolore', 'praticare austerità'. Il termine implica il significato di aumento di calore attraverso l'ascesi.

55 Si tratta di *Jasminum zambac* o *elongatum*, un tipo di gelsomino originario delle aree himalayane da cui si ricava un olio essenziale molto profumato.

25. Oh saggia Rādhā, ascolta! Innalzo a te anche [l'*apsarā*] Urvaśī quale offerta propiziatoria poich  come un prezioso ornamento [*urbasī*] tu risiedi nel cuore [*ura*] di Mohana.<sup>56</sup>
360. I tuoi modi molto cortesi e affettati suscitano timore nel mio cuore [*ura*] cos  come la dolcezza nello zenzero secco genera l'intollerabile sospetto del veleno.

## 10 *Lagana*

Il nome *lagana* e le sue modificazioni indicano la devozione, l'inclinazione, l'attaccamento e quindi l'amore. Esso deriva dal termine sanscrito *lagna* il quale come aggettivo significa aderente, attaccato, intento a, intersecante e come sostantivo maschile   un punto di contatto, il momento favorevole oppure decisivo per il compimento di un'azione.

205.   inquieta, turbata dal nuovo amore [*lagani*] e dal timore della famiglia tirata da entrambe le parti, lei vaga mentre i giorni scorrono come una spola.
74. Dopo essere stata assoggettata a Colui che ha dieci teste<sup>57</sup> - la ritrosia<sup>58</sup> - la fanciulla mostra ora la verit : nella fiamma del fuoco dell'attaccamento [*lagani*], sta purificando il corpo come fece Sīt .
320. Come lanciando un'occhiata seducente, scomparve alla vista, lei struggenti occhi di gazzella, sbirciando di nuovo furtivamente colm  i miei occhi di vivo desiderio [*laganiy *].

## 11 *Prīti*

Il sostantivo femminile *prīti* indica in primo luogo una sensazione piacevole, il piacere, la gioia, la felicit , la soddisfazione, la gratificazione e quindi, in secondo luogo, l'amore e l'affetto.

56 E quindi Mohana (Kṛṣṇa) non sar  mai attratto da un'altra donna. Vi   un gioco di significati e allitterazioni creato dal sintagma *ura basī* (*hvai*) 'che risiedi nel cuore' e il sostantivo *urbasī* ripetuto due volte nelle due diverse accezioni di Urvaśī (la pi  bella tra le *apsar *, incantevoli esseri femminili che risiedono nel cielo del re degli d i, Indra) e *urvaśī* un ornamento che le donne indossano sul petto.

57 R vaṇa, l'antieroe del poema epico *R m yana*.

58 Si tratta dell'indecisione, dell'esitazione, della timidezza che avrebbero impedito alla donna di manifestare il proprio amore e di godere quindi dell'amato.

277. Un attimo di separazione mi uccide, come fossi un pesce fuori dall'acqua:  
istante dopo istante, o amica, questo amore [*prīti*] cocente è sempre più saldo.
605. Questa spina penetrando il piede e ferendomi mi diede la vita:  
con trepidazione, rivelando suo affetto [*prīti*], l'amico sopraggiunse e la estrasse.

## 12 *Surata*

*Surata* è un aggettivo sanscrito che significa gioioso, spensierato, tenero, affettuoso ed è inoltre un sostantivo neutro che indica una grande gioia, la delizia, il piacere (anche sessuale), l'accoppiamento (tra due amanti). Nella *Satasāi* è impiegato secondo questa ultima accezione.

129. Lui è stato vinto e lei è salda nell'amore rovesciato [come l'uomo], risoluta alla  
battaglia dell'amplesso [*surata*]  
i campanellini alla cintola fanno rumore, le cavigliere hanno fatto voto di silenzio.
155. Rādhā, sotto forma di Hari, e Hari, sotto forma di Rādhikā, giunsero al luogo  
convenuto.  
La coppia, anche nel congiungersi [*surata*] in modo naturale, trae piacere  
dall'amore rovesciato [*viparīta rati*].
183. Deliziata dalle gioie dell'amplesso [*surata*], l'intera notte insonne stretta al cuore  
dell'amato  
indugia a ogni passo e, piena di euforia, si gongola.

Il termine nella *Satasāi* è impiegato anche in modo curioso - forse ironico - in un distico che descrive l'atteggiamento di una donna gravida. Il poeta sembra cogliere l'appagamento e l'intima gioia che caratterizza le donne in attesa di un figlio:

692. Con la sua immobilità, gli occhi semiaperti e il corpo stanco  
prostrata dal peso nel grembo appare come fosse appagata dai giochi d'amore  
[*surata*].

### 13 *Kāmanā*

*Kāmanā* è un sostantivo femminile che significa desiderio (egoistico), piacere.

54. Oh diletto! Per il desiderio [*kāmanā*] di incontrarti ella offre in oblazione la felicità: guarda ardere la fiamma - simile a Jvālāmukhī<sup>59</sup> - del fuoco della passione [*lagani*]<sup>60</sup>

### 14 *Ruci*

Il sostantivo femminile *ruci* indica lo splendore, la bellezza, il piacere, la predilezione, il gradimento; può indicare anche un tipo particolare di unione (cfr. Monier-Williams 1988, p. 882).

505. Levandosi in punta di piedi, poggiando il peso sul parapetto, sporgendosi, scrutando con occhi inquieti con impeto [*ruci*] baciaron l'uno dell'altro le bellissime guance.

### 15 *Māna*

Il sostantivo maschile *māna* significa concetto, scopo, desiderio, orgoglio, onore e anche indignazione e ira causate dalla gelosia e quindi denota anche il capriccio, il broncio che una donna risentita mostra all'amato. L'impiego del termine è molto frequente; esso appare in numerose strofe con il significato di desiderio, passione e soprattutto cruccio amoroso. Il broncio e il capriccio sono temi molto ricorrenti nella poesia d'amore: a essere indignata è soprattutto l'eroina la quale è gelosa perché l'amato amoreggia con un'altra donna oppure perché è stata tradita. Spesso il capriccio è solo un espediente messo in atto dalla protagonista per attirare l'attenzione dell'amato e suscitare in lui il desiderio verso di lei.

453. Giorno e notte, persiste la brama, il desiderio [*māna*] non si placa.  
Tanti difetti cerco, in altrettante virtù mi imbatto.

59 Jvālāmukhī è una dea terrifica rappresentata, nei templi a lei dedicati, dalle fiamme e più comunemente dal fumo che escono dalla terra in zone vulcaniche dell'India. L'altare sacrificale su cui sono poste le offerte è il fuoco vulcanico stesso. I devoti venerano la dea affinché ella realizzi i loro desideri.

60 Il termine *lagani* ben si presta al distico in quanto tra le sue varie accezioni vi è anche quella di 'momento favorevole al compimento di un rito'.

562. I caparbi col sopraggiungere della stagione delle piogge non possono più  
intestardirsi:  
come alcuni nodi si stringono,<sup>61</sup> così il nodo della passione [*māna*] si scioglie.
548. Lo dici anche tu: io stessa conosco tutte le astuzie in amore!  
Se il mio cuore resterà saldo vedendo Mohana allora gli terrò il broncio [*māna*].
310. Invero dal tuo cuore il cruccio se n'è andato appena hai visto Brajarāja<sup>62</sup>  
per un istante, come cruccio, è rimasta la vergogna di esserti crucciata.
29. Con lo sguardo imbronciato e un sorriso senza allegria  
la risentita fanciulla rese nota la propria indignazione [*māna*] e l'amante comprese.<sup>63</sup>

## 16 *Viraha*

Il sostantivo maschile *viraha* indica l'abbandono, la separazione, l'assenza, il distacco. Nella *Satasai* è impiegato nella forma *biraha* che vede la trasformazione della semivocale *va* nella labiale *ba*. Il tema del distacco è molto importante nel delineare i vari contesti in cui l'amore si manifesta.

98. Pur ardendo nella fiamma della separazione [*biraha*], non inaridisce neanche un  
po' la liana dell'affetto [*neha*]  
anzi, istante dopo istante, si dispiega ancor più verdeggianti e rigogliosa.
329. La separazione [*viraha*] ne ha prosciugato il corpo e fatto prosperare l'affetto [*nehu*]  
così come, quando scende la pioggia, il *javāsā* si secca e il *jau* germoglia.<sup>64</sup>
457. Celato nella pergamena del cuore, l'affetto non era visibile affatto.  
Ora riscaldati dal fuoco della separazione [*biraha*], i suoi tratti simili [a lettere  
scritte con] il *seṃhura* sono divenuti riconoscibili.<sup>65</sup>

61 Ad esempio quello della veste che a causa dell'umidità diventa molto serrato.

62 Brajarāja è un appellativo di Kṛṣṇa.

63 L'eroina imbronciata è una *mānavatī nāyikā*.

64 Il *javāsā* (*Alhagi camelorum*) fiorisce durante la stagione calda e si secca durante quella monsonica; *jau* o *javā* (*Rosa chinensis*) fiorisce durante la stagione delle piogge (specialmente nel mese di *āṣāṛha* corrispondente a giugno e luglio) producendo fiori rossi.

65 Il *seṃhura* è una pianta la cui secrezione è utilizzata per scrivere lettere segrete poiché il liquido traccia dei segni che diventano visibili solo grazie al calore. Si tratta di un tipo di inchiostro simpatico.

## 17 *Vinoda*

Il termine maschile *vinoda* significa distrazione, passatempo, piacere, divertimento, soddisfazione; può indicare un tipo di abbraccio.<sup>66</sup>

707. Vedendo il *beṃḍī*<sup>67</sup> costellato di diamanti sul viso della donna il piacere [*vinoda*] aumenta  
come se per affetto verso il figlio la Luna piena avesse preso in grembo Mercurio.<sup>68</sup>

Per concludere, vorremmo citare alcuni distici in cui il poeta utilizza dei termini la cui natura è propriamente dottrinale per parlare invece dell'amore umano.

Il primo *dohā* proposto in traduzione è una metafora dell'essere individuale e della sua identificazione con il Principio Universale indicato nel verso dalla parola *piya*, Amato che diventa sinonimo di Paramātma (Spirito Universale). Bihārī accenna allo *yoga* e all'*advaita*, ovvero rispettivamente alla dottrina e alle pratiche dell'unione con la Divinità suprema e alla dottrina della non-dualità suprema. Il *dohā* è costruito su vari doppi sensi (*śleṣa alaṃkāra*).

La seconda strofe allude in modo ironico al principio supremo Brahman e agli strumenti intellettuali per conoscerlo. Il poeta fa comprendere la bellezza dei fianchi snelli della protagonista asserendo che nemmeno attraverso gli strumenti più elevati di conoscenza li si può descrivere.

13. Tutti i metodi [per ottenere] l'unione nello *yoga*<sup>69</sup> ha insegnato [il dio dell'amore] Maina, come [fosse] un *mahāmuni*<sup>70</sup>  
[l'identità suprema] con l'Amato [nello stato di] non-dualità desiderano [realizzare] gli occhi, servendo [con devozione] le orecchie.<sup>71</sup>

66 Cfr. Monier-Williams 1988, p. 972.

67 Si tratta di una decorazione posta sulla fronte, tra le sopracciglia, che consiste in un piccolo segno in genere di forma circolare costituito da varie sostanze, come il sandalo, il cinabro, ecc. oppure in un piccolo ornamento variamente decorato.

68 Dal punto di vista del *jyotiṣa*, tra la Luna e il pianeta Mercurio vi è una relazione filiale. Mercurio cambia natura secondo la vicinanza con altri pianeti, dei quali assume così le caratteristiche. Normalmente il suo colore è verde, ma può essere anche bianco; il senso della strofe è un aforismo astrologico che indica la relazione tra le varie qualità di Mercurio e la loro variazione in base all'associazione con altri corpi celesti e con le pietre preziose.

69 Nella strofe originale troviamo *joga-jugati* che deriva dal sanscrito *yoga-yukti* cioè 'unione nello *yoga*'.

70 Si tratta di uno *yogī*, di un grande saggio.

71 Il termine orecchie è indicato dalla parola *kānanu* che significa anche foresta, cfr. Caturvedī et. al. 1985, p. 343; la parola occhi è *naina* la quale indica anche una persona

648. [La loro esistenza] è affermata a stento facendo uso dell'inferenza tramite  
 l'intelletto, dei *pramāṇa* e della *śruti*:<sup>72</sup>  
 i suoi fianchi sottili<sup>73</sup> non possono essere visti, sono invisibili come il Brahman  
 stesso!

La lingua in cui Bihārī Lāla compose la *Satasai* è sobria e lineare, ma presenta un'ampia varietà di vocaboli e una flessibilità sintattica che hanno permesso al poeta di elaborare complessi giochi verbali di cui è spesso difficile – talora impossibile – trovare il corrispettivo nella lingua italiana perché si fondano su elementi tipici della sola civiltà indiana; lo stile è molto conciso a causa della scala ridotta delle strofe indipendenti e dimostra la profonda conoscenza da parte del poeta della retorica classica. L'opera raccoglie numerose immagini della lirica indiana classica le quali sono proposte con molte varianti e con una costante tensione all'originalità. I temi sono molteplici: la devozione, l'etica e la politica, le concezioni dottrinali, massime e aforismi significativi; l'argomento principale è certamente l'amore come evidenziato dall'indagine condotta nel presente articolo; i *dohā* selezionati rivelano come il poeta non volle indulgere maliziosamente su questo tema contrariamente a quanto fecero altri esponenti del periodo i quali contribuirono ad associare la scuola *rīti* a un poetare decadente e poco significativo distogliendo così l'attenzione degli studiosi dall'indagine delle opere *rīti*. Numerose strofe sono ispirate al culto di Kṛṣṇa e assumono la forma di elaborati quadretti che ritraggono il dio e la sua amata, Rādhā. Il poeta disponeva di vastissime fonti di letteratura devozionale; inoltre la *bhakti* rivolta a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa condizionava profondamente il suo ambiente culturale di formazione: Gwalior città natale, Mathura luogo di elezione, Amber antica capitale, poi sostituita da Jaipur, del re Jaya Singh sotto il cui patrocinio Bihārī fu poeta di corte e compose la sua antologia.

La *Satasai* di Bihārī Lāla Caube e la corrente letteraria a cui essa è ritenuta appartenere sono state esaminate solo di recente dagli studiosi occidentali, in particolar modo da Snell e Busch, mentre sono abbastanza note negli ambienti letterari dell'India contemporanea dove tuttavia le indagini risentono della particolare prospettiva ideologica assunta dalla neo nata critica letteraria *hindī* agli inizi del Novecento. Eppure i numerosissimi commentari redatti nel corso dei secoli rivelano che la *Satasai*

'dalla condotta disciplinata' è può quindi riferirsi a uno *yogī*. Un altro possibile significato dell'ultima parte del distico è 'lo *yogī* rende servizio a Dio nella foresta'.

72 I *pramāṇa* sono i testi autorevoli o gli insegnamenti dei maestri; la *śruti* è costituita dai testi vedici e, in senso traslato, dalle parole dei maestri.

73 Il concetto di sottile è indicato dall'aggettivo sanscrito *sukṣma* il quale letteralmente significa 'non grossolano' quindi non percepibile attraverso l'attività delle cinque facoltà di sensazione. Anche il termine 'invisibile', *alakha* nell'originale, è un vocabolo dalle forti connotazioni dottrinali. Esso deriva dall'aggettivo sanscrito *alakṣya*.

fu accolta fin dagli esordi come un capolavoro della poesia lirica in lingua *brajabhāṣā*. La *Satasāi* è la testimonianza di una cultura letteraria raffinata. Per lo stile ricercato, la profusione di figure ornamentali e gli esiti di alta levatura poetica la *Satasāi* può essere considerata una forma recente di letteratura d'arte dell'India classica, *kāvya*,<sup>74</sup> e un'opera significativa della corrente letteraria *rīti*, il cosiddetto 'manierismo' indiano.

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74 Cfr. Lienhard, Boccali 1994, p. 10. Fra gli studiosi indiani contemporanei solo alcuni non si sono limitati a considerarla dentro gli angusti limiti del manierismo, fra questi il poeta Lāla Bhagavānadīna 'Dīna' per il quale «Bihārī era un ottimo conoscitore della disciplina del *kāvya* (*kāvyarīti*). La *Satasāi* è ricolma di tutto il materiale necessario per comprendere la letteratura *kāvya*» (Lāla Bhagavānadīna 'Dīna' 2010, p. 2). Mālavīya, autore di una recente edizione critica, afferma che «questa raccolta di circa settecento distici è degna di essere tenuta in alta considerazione dagli estimatori del *kāvya* (*kāvyaśāstra*)» (Mālavīya 2008, vol. 1, p. 1.). Nella seconda metà del secolo XIX lo studioso britannico Grierson pubblicò un'importante edizione critica della *Satasāi* (il *Lālacandrikā* di Lallūjī Lāl) e nell'introduzione la definì secondo i canoni del *kāvya* come un'opera *muktaka* (di strofe indipendenti) e di genere *saptaśatī* (antologia di settecento strofe) (Grierson 1896, pp. 3-4).



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## **Divine Sanction and Human Intervention** The Issue of Birth-control and Family-planning in the Light of a Twentieth Century Urdū Treatise by an Indian Sufi Shaikh

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**Abstract** Some aspects concerning the controversial issue of birth-control and family planning as described and prescribed by Muslim authorities are yet to be investigated. A short treatise by a twentieth century traditional Muslim scholar and Sufi master provides the opportunity to address this topic, exploring the ways traditional authorities in the past and present have outlined the clues for providing an orthodox yet surprisingly accommodating answer vis-à-vis a topic of utmost actuality in contemporary society.

**Keywords** Birth Control. Indian Sufism. Urdu.

A recent article in the *Times of India* reports that after a delay of more than one year, in February 2015 the Indian government will finally release the data from the 2011 Census of India concerning the religious affiliation of the country's rapidly growing population. The reluctance of the government to publish this specific kind of data (those concerning other areas have long been made public!) suggests how religious affiliation is still regarded as a highly charged political and social issue in a country which, while gaining political independence in 1947, was to pass through the traumatic experience of being partitioned on religious grounds. With sensibilities running especially high among members of the two biggest, i.e. Hindu and Muslim, communities, the delay in publishing the data is attributed by most commentators to the fear among Indian politicians that a likely further shift in the ratio between the country's minority Muslim population against the majority Hindu community would raise concerns and potentially cause social tensions, especially in view of a string of elections in federal states with a strong Muslim presence (68.3% in Jammu & Kashmir, 34.2% in Assam). In fact, the unofficial data pertaining to the Census published by the *Indian Express* would confirm that, among other things, the ratio between the two communities has yet again seen a decrease of the percentage of Hindus (78.35% as compared to 80.45% in 2001 and 84.1% during the country's first census in 1951) against a small

but steady increase of the percentage of Muslims (14.2% as compared to 13.4% in 2001, and 9.8% in 1951, that is, shortly after independence) in the country's overall population.

Against this background, the present article intends to address the closely related issue of birth control and family-planning which, in the South Asian context in general and in India in particular, has a long and often painful history going as far back as the early 1950's. However, rather than focusing on its social, medical and political aspects, which since the former Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi's campaign of coercive sterilization during the 1975-77 emergency have kept making national and international headlines, it wants to investigate some aspects concerning the delicate and controversial issue of birth-control and contraception as described and prescribed by Muslim textual authority. Seeking inspiration from a short yet concise and authoritative treatise written by a twentieth century Indian Muslim scholar and Sufi master, the aim is to explore the ways Muslim authorities in the past and the present have provided the clues for defining an orthodox (from an Islamic point of view) yet sometimes surprisingly modern, flexible and accommodating answer vis-à-vis a topic of utmost actuality in India and in contemporary society at large. Scrutinizing some of the statements and opinions expressed by scholarly experts in the course of the history of Islam, both inside and outside South Asia, it emerges that whereas the views held by the learned scholars and jurists are often subtle and nuanced leaving space for interpretation, other aspects are addressed in an almost unequivocal fashion. They hence contradict the widespread perception of a monolithic Islam the authority of which is far too frequently believed to rely on the literal (mis-) interpretations of the primary textual sources (i.e. Qur'ān and Sunna) promulgated by numerous self-declared authorities.

For most of us, the issues of birth-control and family planning are concepts associated with modernity, affecting the lives of individuals, couples and families in contemporary societies increasingly dominated by Western values and a materialistic approach to life. By contrast, nothing seems to be so openly and willingly in contrast with modernity than Islam, too frequently depicted as a conservative and restrictive religion incapable of innovating itself and adjusting to the requirements of the changing times. It may therefore come as a surprise to many that a traditional Sufi authority better known for his intellectual elaborations on doctrinal issues pertaining to the esoteric science may have chosen to focus his attention on such kind of topic. And yet, Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan Zaid Fārūqī (1906-1993), a renowned spiritual authority (*shaiḥ*) in the Indian branch of the Naqshbandiyya, the Mujaddidiyya, a Sufi order whose authorities are best known for their strict Sunni interpretation of both the spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*) and its legal foundation (*sharī'a*), has sought it useful and necessary to express his opinion at this regard, probably not by mere coincidence at a time

when the Indian government had begun to actively promote both male and female sterilization as part of the official family planning program in the mid 60's of the past century. As becomes clear from the opening pages of the treatise, the text was originally intended as a reply to a legal enquiry (*mustaftī*) by Sayyid Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad Kāẓimī, a member of Delhi's 'ālim community, concerning the legitimacy for Muslims in the present historical conditions (*fasād-i zamāna*) and according to the requirements of modern times (*ẓarūrat-i waqt*) of resorting to contraception (*mān'-i ḥaml*) and adhering to the government-promoted schemes of family planning (*khāndānī maṣūba-bandī*) (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, p. 7). The articulated answer to this query was eventually expanded to become a separate, short treatise on the issue bearing the title *Masla-i ḍabt-i wilādat* (The Problem of Birth Control). Its first edition was published in Safar 1388/May 1968 in 3,000 copies which were sent out to a range of traditional Muslim scholars and academics in India and in neighbouring Pakistan. Touching on a very sensitive issue, it yielded an immediate response from many of the recipients who, although in some cases disagreeing with the author's conclusions, on the whole reacted positively to the scholarly initiative by the respected Naqshbandī shaikh and 'ālim. Some of these opinions and reactions have been collected and included in the book's second edition which was published only a few months later in Dhū'l-Ḥijja 1388/February 1969. Useful as a reference vis-à-vis an issue of utmost actuality at the time of publication, which saw the Muslim community compelled to pronounce itself in the light of the policy of family-planning aggressively promoted by the Indian government during those years, the author carefully avoids any hint to the social and political dimension of the problem, something that lies outside his scope. As he himself declares in the opening pages of the second edition, the intention behind the publication of the text was solely of a scholarly nature attempting to shed some light on the juridical, i.e. legal groundings of this issue.

On the other hand, books and treatises specifically addressing the topic of birth-control and family-planning were not unprecedented in twentieth century Muslim India. Already in the mid-1930's, the influential and controversial Muslim leader Sayyid Abū'l-Alā Maudūdī (1903-1979) wrote extensively on the subject, publishing his thoughts in serialized form in the *Tarjumān al Qur'ān*, a monthly journal concerned with religious and social issues edited during those years by him and his brother from Hyderabad (Deccan). This series was subsequently published in book form in 1943 and again, in a revised edition, in 1962 from Lahore in what by then had become West-Pakistan. Although neither a trained theologian nor a qualified jurist, Maudūdī ventured into a theological discussion to corroborate his strong opposition to any form of birth-control and contraception. In his opinion, this policy was part of a Western plot against Islam aimed at promoting the dissolution of the traditional social order, the imple-

mentation of which would eventually lead to moral degeneration, sexual promiscuity and licentiousness (Maudūdī 1962, p. 79). He takes up the traditional argument that the gift of procreation and sustenance (and hence also the inability of procreation) pertains to the realm of Allāh's exclusive prerogatives, quoting in his support the Qur'anic verses since long cited by those opposed to contraception: *is there a Creator, other than God, to give you sustenance from heaven or earth?* (Sūrat al-fāṭir, Koran 35,3); and: *There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance dependeth on God* (Sūrat al-Hūd, Koran 11,6), and: *Lost are those who slay their children, from folly, without knowledge, and forbid food which God hath provided for them, inventing lies for God* (Sūrat al-an'ām, Koran 6,140). Many years later, the controversy stirred up by Maudūdī's contribution to the discussion in Pakistan eventually led to the temporary proscription, in 1966, of his book by the government of Pakistan, a decision which, however, was soon after to be revoked. It nevertheless demonstrates the lasting actuality of the problem and at the same time indicates the popularity of Maudūdī's way of addressing the issue.

More recently, the contrasting opinions expressed by the two chief *muftīs* of Delhi, the present *shāhī imām* of the city's historical Shāhjahānī Jama' Masjid, Sayyid Aḥmad Bukhārī and Muftī Mukarram Aḥmad, since 1971 head *imām* of the Fatehpuri Masjid and himself a recognized authority in the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī order, are indicative of the persistence of different stances on the subject among influential Muslim scholars in India even today. Whereas the former has repeatedly stressed the incompatibility of family-planning with the values of traditional Islam, the latter takes a more balanced stance asserting the need for Muslims to adopt a middle way in life which would take into account what is in practical sense achievable in the present-day circumstances (Weigl 2010, p. 211). Mukarram's position on contraception is hence more differentiated than that of his more politically-oriented contemporary, as he makes a distinction between permanent and temporary measures of contraception, pronouncing himself against the use of the former, but allowing for the conditional use of the latter. Such point of view, as we shall see, comes closer to that held by Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan himself, and reflects an approach to the topic based on scholarly investigation of the available textual sources.

The statements made by Muftī Mukarram Aḥmad suggest the underlying complexity of the topic of family-planning, contraception and birth-control. As so often happens in Islam in absence of a central authority for the interpretation of the primary textual sources, the issue of birth control and family-planning is defined by contrasting views and positions among the learned interpreters (*mujtahid*) of the Law. With the proliferation of modern techniques of contraception, the fundamental question arises as to which of these should be outrightly rejected as unlawful (*ḥarām*) and which qualify for closer investigation and, once these are identified, whether

the *sharī'a* considers birth control (*ḍabt al-wilādat*) and its range of methods as permissible (*jā'iz*) or not, whether it is permissible within certain limits or whether it should be regarded as altogether unlawful (*ḥarām*). The position held by some conservative authorities is that in Islam there is no room at all for birth control. Based on the authority of the Qur'anic verse: *Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily, the killing of them is a great sin* (*Sūrat al-asrā, Koran 17,31*), they assert, in an altogether similar fashion to that of Maudūdī, that it is impossible for a pious Muslim to resort to any kind of practice apt at impeding the course of a divinely prearranged plan or destiny, hence the intervention of human decision to intervene in the course of nature is interpreted as an unlawful limitation of God's power (*qudrat*). It is precisely in view of the contrasting opinions encountered among different strains of Muslim authorities in the present as well as in the past on one side and the desire of many common Muslims to receive an answer to their doubts and queries on the other that Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan Zaid Fārūqī has deemed it useful and necessary to investigate the issue in some detail. Collecting a considerable amount of material taken from a variety of sources, he refers to a range of authoritative scholarly texts compiled over the centuries in order to investigate and illustrate the issue of birth control from a traditional and orthodox, that is juridical (*fiqhī*), point of view.

If considered within the context of traditional sciences, the problem of birth-control falls within the realm of *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence, whose authorities (*fuqahā*, plural of *faqīh*) are responsible for the correct interpretation (*ijtihād*) of the Divine law (*sharī'a*). With concern to the issue of birth-control, Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan, in a truly scholarly fashion that distinguishes a *faqīh*, begins his discussion by declaring that even though the term birth-control (*ḍabt al-wilādat*) is in itself a new one, not encountered among the *'ulamā* and *fuqahā* of the past, the necessity to apply such unprecedented, modern terminology to an old concept is not to be deemed reproachable (*lā mushāḥat fī'l-istilāḥī*) (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, p. 8). Yet, many of the methods of contraception are in one way or the other mentioned in the juridical reference works compiled over time whereas others, more specifically modern ones, have been addressed by contemporary authorities. Thus is established that the source (*aṣl*) moving the reasoning on the use of contraceptives among Muslim scholars is the established practice of *'azl*.

It is generally agreed upon by scholars of Islam that the most acceptable (and hence widely used) method of birth-control and contraception (*man' al-ḥaml*) is that known as *'azl*. The term derives from the Arabic verbal root *'a-za-la*, meaning 'to put away or aside', hence: removal, dismissal. In the specific context, it indicates the *coitus interruptus*, a practice well-known in ancient Arabia the use of which is attested since pre-Islamic times. Nu-

merous prophetic Traditions (*aḥādīth*, plural of *ḥadīth*) confirming its acceptance by the prophet of Islam are included in the canonical collections of prophetic Traditions. The *Saḥīḥain* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and the *Sunan* collections all contain explicit references to it and the four canonical schools of Sunni Law (*madhāhib*, plural of *madhhab*), i.e. Ḥanafī, Malikī, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī, all have addressed the issue in their authoritative manuals. According to the heads of these four schools, i.e. Abū Ḥanīfa (80/699-148/767), Mālik ibn Anas (93/711-179/795), Muḥammad al-Shāfi'ī (150/767-204/820) and Aḥmad ibn Hanbal (164/780-241/855), the practice of 'azl is either permissible (*jā'iz*) or neutral (*mubāḥ*). Although opinions vary as to the circumstances in which 'azl can or should be practiced, there is a general consensus among the experts in canonical Islamic law (*fuqahā*, plural of *faqīh*) to declare the practice of 'azl as a lawful means of birth-control and contraception. The practice of 'azl is considered to be part of the so-called barrier or temporary/accidental methods (*'ārdī sūrat*), in contrast with the permanent methods of contraception (*dā'imī sūrat*). The former include also the most popular contraceptive used in modern times, i.e. condoms which, in a sense must be considered as a modern evolution of the ancient technique of 'azl.

Perhaps, the scholar who has treated the topic of birth-control in greatest detail is the renowned theologian, jurist and Sufi Abū Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī (450/1058-505/1111) in his *opus magnum*, the *Iḥyā' ulūm al-Dīn* (Revival of the Religious Sciences). To testify the reliance of many Sufi-oriented authorities, both of the past and at present, on the elaborations of this outstanding Muslim scholar, Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan includes an entire chapter, albeit not written by himself but by his close friend Maulānā Qāḍī Sajjād Ḥusain, then head of the Madrasa 'Āliya at Delhi's Fatepuri mosque, to explaining al-Ghazālī's viewpoint on this issue. This chapter reiterates the well-known stance by the Shāfi'ī jurist al-Ghazālī who in principle agrees that the matter of impregnation should be left with God alone, but would allow for it in case of economic constraints on the side of the man who practices it. Such a position is seen by Abū'l-Ḥasan and Qāḍī Sajjād Ḥusain as what they describe as a pre-modern concession to modernity that clearly goes against the argument that by acting with intention in mind (*niyya*) one violates one of the basic principles of Islam, i.e. the trust in God for sustenance sanctioned by a series of frequently cited Qur'anic passages. As with concern to the apparent contradiction resulting from the statement which on one side condemns the practice of 'azl as 'secret infanticide' and on the other declares its definition as minor infanticide as wrong, al-Ghazālī, who generally accepts 'azl as a permissible practice notes that the use of the term 'secret infanticide' in this context has to be intended equivalent to the phrase dissimulation is concealed infidelity (*shirk al-khafī*), which would indicate a sense of aversion and detestation (*karāhat*) for such practice on behalf of the prophet. Aversion, al-Ghazālī

argues, manifests itself on the occasion of prohibiting something (*tahṛīm*), when purifying oneself from an impurity (*tanzīha*) or as a result of neglect of the inner virtues. Hence, for him to resort to its practice it is respectable, not to practice it is better and the third meaning evinced from it is that to practice 'azl preserves the inner virtue and excellence (*faḍīlat*) of a person. He explains the apparent contradiction as something undesirable (*makrūh*), but not out rightly forbidden (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, pp. 12-13).

Yet another scholar of the past who has dedicated much attention to the question of birth-control was the Ḥanbali jurist from Syria, Ibn Qayyim Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Jawzīya (d. 751/1350). In his *Zād al-ma'ād fī hadī khair al-'ibād* (Provisions of the Hereafter on the Teachings of the Best of All People), Ibn Jawzīya has collected what is perhaps the largest amount of prophetic Traditions deemed authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) on the issue of 'azl. The majority of these seem to corroborate the view that Muḥammad considered this practice lawful (*ḥalāl*) and permissible (*jawāz*). However, Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan also cites Ibn Jawzīya as reporting that some among the learned scholars of Islam consider it forbidden (*ḥarām*) on the authority of the often quoted *ḥadīth* listed by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in which the prophet Muḥammad apparently declared the practice of 'azl as being tantamount to burying a child alive: *then they asked him about [the practice of] 'azl, whereupon he replied: «That is the secret [way of] burying [it] (dhalīka al-wadu al-khafī)»*, whereas 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, one of the earliest converts to Islam and among the most intimate companions of the prophet (*ṣaḥāba*), reportedly defined this practice it as minor infanticide (*al-maw'ūdat al-ṣuḡhrā*).

The view that any kind of contraception is to be regarded as *ḥarām* has been strongly endorsed by a group of Muslim scholars around the Andalusian philosopher, theologian and jurist Ibn Ḥazm (384/994-456/1064), probably the best known opponent of contraception among the 'ulamā of the classical age. Ibn Ḥazm condemns all kinds of contraception including 'azl, judging them as being equivalent to infanticide on the basis of the above mentioned prophetic Traditions which, he asserts, although less in number as compared to those in which he apparently condoned or even allowed for practicing 'azl, refer to a later period in the prophet's life and must be considered as having been abrogated, for Muḥammad's later statements hence represent his true opinion (Atighetchi 2007, pp. 79-80). As well-presented the argument of these scholars may appear, Abū'l-Ḥasan comments, this position was never shared by the majority of authorities of the time and has emerged more powerfully only in relatively recent times, during the time of the merging reform movements. They become particularly articulated in the views of the renowned Indian expert of prophetic traditions (*muḥaddith*) Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz (1159/1746-1824), the eldest and most prominent son of the great scholar and sufi Shāh Walī Allāh, as voiced in his *Fatāwā-yi-'azīzī* (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, p. 54). However,



Ibn Jawzīya in his own right comes to the conclusion that it is impossible to compare the above mentioned *ḥadīth* against the reported claim made by 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd. To support his view, he quotes the following authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) Tradition reported by al-Tirmidhī which explicitly contradicts the juxtaposition of the practice of *coitus interruptus* with that of minor infanticide: *Jabīr ibn 'Abd Allāh narrated: «Oh messenger of Allāh! We practice 'azl, but the Jews claim that it is minor infanticide.» So he said: «The Jews lie. When Allāh wants to create it, nothing can prevent Him»*. Thus, Abū'l-Ḥasan agrees favourably with Ibn Jawzīya that judging by this authoritative Tradition alone, Islam would appear to set itself in net contrast with Jewish law which strictly prohibits the practice of *coitus interruptus* (cf. Gen. 38,9-10).

In order to lend support to this position, al-Jawzīya, Imām Kamāl al-Dīn ibn al-Humām (d. 861/1457) and Mullā 'Alī Qārī (d. 1014/1605) all cite a *ḥadīth* which relates the story of a discussion during which 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb (581-644), 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (599-661), Zubair ibn al-'Awāmm (594-656), Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (595-674) and other companions of the prophet (*ṣaḥāba*) were present when the issue of 'azl was raised. All companions agreed that there was no harm in practicing it. When one among the present raised the objection that some people consider this practice as equivalent to minor infanticide (*maw'ūda al-ṣuḡhrā*), 'Alī is said to have replied: «Until the foetus will not pass through seven stages [of development] (Ar.: *iṭwār*, pl. of *ṭaur*), it cannot be considered infanticide». 'Alī is then reported to have recited the famous Qur'anic verses, in which the gradual development of a human being inside a woman's womb is described in a very poetical and suggestive fashion: *Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a lump (foetus); then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed out of it another creature. So blessed be God, the best to create (Sūrat al-mu'minūn, Koran 23,12-14)*. 'Alī then went on explaining to the others present in the discussion that first there was a quintessence of clay (*sulālat*), then a drop of sperm (*nutfat*), then a clot of congealed blood (*'alqat*), then a lump of flesh (fetus, *mudhghat*) and finally another creature (*khalqan*). On hearing this explanation, 'Umar is said to have praised 'Alī wishing him that Allāh may increase his life span.

On the basis of the quoted Qur'anic verse, 'Alī has thus been able to explain that it is not possible to define the practice of preventing the man's sperm from flowing into the woman's womb as 'child burial' since a new human being cannot be possibly defined as such before going through all the above mentioned seven evolutionary stages. By transferring and adapting this logical deduction to the more contemporary issue of abortion or voluntary interruption of pregnancy (*isqāṭī ḥaml*), most contemporary

'ulamā have declared that abortion is permissible until the foetus has reached the age of 120 days. It is permissible to abort until 120 days after conception, since until that moment the foetus is not fully developed and hence its killing cannot be regarded as infanticide. To support this argument, the following Tradition is cited: [The Creation of] *a human being is put together in the womb of the mother in forty days, then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period. Then Allāh sends an angel who is ordered to write four things... then the soul is breathed into him.* As we can see from the just quoted authoritative *ḥadīth*, Islamic tradition considers the amount of time of three times forty day for a total of 120 days or roughly three months, as the period required for the foetus to develop into a human being which corresponds to approximately the same period considered by legislation in most Western countries as the limit within which abortion can be legally practiced. Hanafi legal opinion, to which our Sufi author subscribes, allows abortion provided it is done within 120 days after impregnation.

Since there are no explicit statements in the Qur'ān concerning the permissibility or impermissibility of 'azl, most scholars tend to take into account the variables involved while making recourse to this practice, such as the conditions of each individual and/or family and changing historical circumstances. A *ḥadīth* related by Abū Huraira and reported by Ibn Mājah says: *Do not use 'azl with your wife without her permission.* The classical position taken by most juridic schools (*madhāhab*, plural of *madhhab*) is to consider 'azl lawful if practiced with the consent of the wife. If the four imām of the principal legal schools of Sunni Islam have agreed on declaring the practice of 'azl as ultimately permissible, this permission appears however to have been made conditional on the consent of the wife (*tazi'i nutfa*, lit.: spoiling of the sperm) whose sexual satisfaction must be guaranteed and safeguarded if recourse to 'azl is to be made and without which 'azl is not permissible (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, pp. 18-19).

In view of the deteriorating conditions of time, the reasons put forward for abolishing the original condition of seeking one's wife consent appears reasonable and well pondered. At this regard, Abū'l-Ḥasan reminds the reader of the event described in the Qur'anic chapter of the Cave (*Sūrat al-kahf*, *Koran* 18) concerning Moses and his mysterious companion endowed with divinely inspired science (*'ilm al-ladunnī*), which most esoteric traditions agree to identify with Ḥaḍrat Khidr. When during their common journey they met a young man who was slain by Khidr, Moses said: *Hast thou slain an innocent person who had slain none?* (*Koran* 18,74). On which, Ḥaḍrat Khidr explained to him: *«As for the youth, his parents were people of faith, and we feared that he would grieve them by obstinate rebellion and ingratitude»* (*Koran* 18,80). In a typical Sufi fashion, Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan observes that the same way Ḥaḍrat Khidr acted on the order of his Lord when he killed the undutiful and wicked (*nā-khalaf*) boy in order to prevent

the blindness caused by the love his father and mother nourished for him to lead to their ruin and death, that same way the learned and savant have applied their subtle discernment and mildness of heart for the sake of the Muslim *'umma*. Hence, the final verdict that in these times of increasing corruption and moral decline, in which the chance that one's own children turn against their parents has become a real danger, there is no more need to guarantee the satisfaction of one's wife in sexual intercourse, but the practice of *'azl* is permissible for the sole sake of preventing pregnancy, without any further condition (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, p. 21).

Ibn Humām has supported this view in his writings and Ibn 'Ābidīn quotes two conditions to support his stance on *'azl*, i.e. that both husband and wife be either on a long journey or find themselves in a non-muslim country (*dār al-ḥarb*). He, Tahtawī and al-Mas'ūd declare, moreover, that it is permissible for women to close the mouth of their uterus (*raḥim*) in order to prevent them from becoming pregnant without seeking the consent of their husband (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, p. 17).

The third method falling into the category of accidental measures of contraception is that of observing the rhythm of time (*maḥfūḍ zamāna kī ri'āyat*), that is, to limit sexual intercourse to those days during which the women's womb is not receptive to impregnation, a technique known in to modern Western science as Ogino Knauss method. And again, the permissible methods of contraception include the use of the contraceptive pill (*mān'a-i ḥaml golī*), although in the case of this latter it is necessary to seek the advice of an expert medical doctor in order to prevent the woman's health from being affected by any harm or damage (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, p. 21).

To sum it up, to resort to these accidental and temporary methods of contraception without any dislike or aversion is permissible. According to both scholars of the past (*mutaqaḍamīn*) and the present (*muta'ākhīrīn*) it is permissible without any objection to be practiced by reciprocal consent in the couple. According to most scholars of the modern period, even if practiced by any one member of the couple without seeking the consent of the other these methods are permissible, because of the worsening conditions of the time, in order to prevent an uncontrolled increase in a family's progeny.

The principal permanent or irreversible (*dā'imī*) methods of birth control are male sterilization (*mard kī nasbandī*) or vasectomy and women sterilization (*'aml jarrāhī*), consisting of hysterectomy or tubal ligation. These are modern techniques of birth-control unknown in ancient times, hence no reference to them is found in the primary sources of authority in Islam, neither in the Qur'ān nor in the Sunna nor among the *'ulamā* of the pre-modern period.

Those opposed to the practice of male sterilization quote the Qur'anic verses already mentioned in the context of Maudūdī's argument: *There is*

*no moving creature on earth but its subsistence dependeth on God (Sūrat Hūd, Koran 11,6), but also: And in Heaven is your subsistence, as that which ye are promised (Sūrat al-dhāriyāt, Koran 51,22) in support of their view. And the Prophet has said: Marry the child-bearing, loving woman for I shall outnumber the peoples by you on the Day of Resurrection (ḥadīth narrated in Sunan Abū Dā'ūd and al-Nasā'ī<sup>1</sup>) that is to say: the Muslim community will excel over the other communities because of the abundance of its progeny. These textual references are used to derive the incumbency on every Muslim to make every effort to increase the number of his offspring, so as to contribute to the excellency, prosperity and happiness of the Muslim 'umma over all other communities. They argue that those who resort to male sterilization because of economic constraints and indigence thereby show his lack of reliance and trust upon God, whereas it is incumbent not to nourish any doubt as with regard to His sustenance. For surely, God is He Who gives all Sustenance (Sūrat al-dhāriyāt, Koran 51,58) and surely, the prosperity and multitude of the community of the messenger of Allāh is desirable. There can be doubt in this, and yet there are some aspects which must be investigated before reaching a definite verdict.*

Allāh has established numerous rules and causes for this ephemeral world, to disregard and turn away from these is against the *sunna* and the ways commanded by Him. That precisely was the bond between Him and His messenger and in His treasure-house there will never ever be any want, even if many people fail to understand this, for notwithstanding all this, He has commanded: *Make not thy hand tied to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute. Verily, thy Lord doth provide sustenance and abundance for whom He pleaseth, and He provideth in a just measure. For He doth know and regard all His servants (Sūrat al-isrā, Koran 17,29-30).*

By contrast, according to Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan (1969) in absence of clear evidence for these practices in the original sources, the contemporary 'ulamā have formulated their legal opinions and judgments through deductive analogy (*qiyās*), a process also called deduction (*istinbāt*) or derivation (*istikhrāj*). He identifies three major positions held at this regard.

The first holds that sterilization is tantamount to permanent castration (*ikhtiṣā'*), since both irrevocably prevent the possibility of impregnation. To adopt this view cannot be corroborated by the fact alone that the testicles (*khuṣya*) are permanently removed, for a castrated man (*khaṣī* or *ākhta*) cannot have regular sexual intercourse (Arabic: *mubāsharat*, Urdu: *ham-bastarī*), whereas for a person that has undergone sterilization the situation is indeed different, since such a person preserves his viral power (*quwwat-i mardī*) intact and is hence able to maintain sexual relations

1 *Al-Sunan al-sughrā, Kitāb al-nikāḥ*, in Siddiqui 1994, 2, 1, p. 314.

with his wife as before. Male sterilization intended as vasectomy does not imply the removal of any part of the body, involves the bilateral disruption of the *vas deferens*, thereby preventing the expulsion of sperm from the penis and thus preventing impregnation of the sexual partner. By contrast, castration not only leads to the permanent perishing of the male sperm, it also brings about a remarkable decrease in virility. Therefore, argues Abū'l-Ḥasan, no analogy can be established between these two actions, there is a huge difference between them (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, pp. 22-29).

The second view holds that the practice of sterilization amounts to an intentional alteration in God's creation (*taghīr al-khalq*) and must therefore be regarded as sinful. Those who subscribe to this point of view assert that to resort to such method openly contradicts what is thus sanctioned in the Holy Book: *But Shaiṭān said: «I will take of thy servants a portion marked off... And I will mislead them, and I will create in them false desires; I will order them to slit the ears of cattle, and to deface the fair nature created»* (*Sūrat al-nisā*, Koran 4,118-119). This verse mentions a series of rituals currently practiced among the people of pre-Islamic Arabia, such as slitting the ears of some animals, to mark, hurt or even deface them so as to make them easily recognizable since they have been released for the sake of the (false) gods. And some of them did not release them, so in order to please Satan they altered the creation of God (Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, pp. 13-15). But what does it actually mean to alter the creation of Allāh? There is some controversy among the learned scholars at this regard. Some have interpreted it as meaning 'intervention in the process God's Creation' (*takhliq*), which by definition is a created and fabricated thing (*āfrīnīsh*). According to this interpretation, the slitting of the ears of those animals mentioned in the above mentioned Qur'anic verse occurs due to deception by *shaiṭān*, thus altering the body of the animals as they were originally created by God. Those who subscribe to this point of view consider the slitting of the ears by analogy an illegitimate intervention in God's act of creation. As an example, Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan quotes the opinion of Imām Mujāhid ibn Jabr (642-722 AD), author of one of the earliest commentaries (*tafsīr*) on the Qur'ān, according to whom to alter God's creation implies an alteration in the true Divine Law (*Dīn qayim*), because this is the meaning clearly conveyed by the Qur'ān: *So set you thy face steadily and truly to the faith: establish God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change [let there be] in the work [wrought by God], that is the standard religion (Dīn qayim), but most among mankind understand not* (*Sūrat al-Rūm*, Koran 30,30). According to Mujāhid (*Tafsīr*, as quoted by Abū'l-Ḥasan 1969, p. 17), the first verse should be interpreted as being introduced by: (*Shaiṭān said:*) *I will deceive them so that they shall alter the true Dīn created by God*. Hence, those who condemn the practice of sterilization as an act equivalent to the alteration of God's creation accept this interpretation claiming that those who resort to such practice alter

God's handiwork and the bodies born out of this creative process, judging it non-permissible (*nā-jā'iz*) and forbidden (*ḥarām*), and hence declaring it an undesirable act bordering with the forbidden (*makrūh taḥrīmī*).

However, Abū'l-Ḥasan considers the proofs and contention of those who subscribe to this point of view as objectionable. First of all, he states, the interpretation and explanation advanced by those who advocate the unlawfulness of sterilization as a method of contraception reflects a position that is in between two positions which, if examined against each other, does not subsist, for there cannot subsist any truth in a position that contradicts itself. Second, the verse quoted refers to the evil inherent to an alteration derived from the deception of *shaitān* and hence does not condemn universally any kind of alteration. To practice sterilization does not entail the removal of any bodily part, whereas, by contrast, the practice of circumcision (*khatna*) effectively implies the amputation of a bodily part and thus an intervention on God's handiwork with permanent consequences. And yet, not only is circumcision not condemned, but is a recommended custom among Muslims since it is an act not perpetrated for the sake of *shaitān* but for the Most Merciful. Women have their ears and noses cut for the purpose of enhancing their beauty with ornaments such as earrings and nose rings, yet the *sharī'a* allows this practice.

Abū'l-Ḥasan (1969, pp. 14-15) goes then on to cite the nineteenth century Syrian jurist Imām Ibn 'Abidīn al-Shāmī (1198/1783-1252/1836), who in his authoritative work on Ḥanafī *fiqh* titled *Radd al-muḥtār 'alā al-durr al-mukhtār* is quoted as writing:

Whatever action is accomplished for the benefit of God's servants, if no harm derives from it, must be declared as permissible by analogy (*qiyās*). Hence, the *'ulamā* have declared the castration of animals for the benefit for men as permissible because it helps making the meat of these animals more tender and tasteful. In addition, it is a common practice among herdsmen to sign the animals of their flock with specific marks of distinction; they do it out of their own needs, not because of any deception by or for the sake of *shaitān*. On the bases of the above mentioned premises, these actions are not sinful, but according to the rules of the *sharī'a* that according to necessity, those things which are forbidden become permissible (*mubāh*).

There derives that those who resort to sterilization do not act for the sake of pleasing *shaitān*, but because outer circumstances compel them to make recourse to it. Abū'l-Ḥasan develops the consequential reasoning that they supposedly do so because they feel that the progeny Allāh has already granted them as much as they can possibly bear and only with utmost difficulty they are capable of facing the expenses for their upbringing, maintenance and education; and since they cannot possibly face the

expenses deriving from a further increase in progeny, any further child would cause great trouble to them forcing them to generate additional income through illegal means. Thus a real danger arises that they will get involved in activities that go against the decrees of Allāh thereby attracting His wrath and anger and making *shaiṭān* happy.

The reasoning adopted by Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan here follows closely that of al-Ghazālī when he asserts that those who resort to the practice of sterilization do so simply because they are compelled to do so in order to prevent themselves from being forced into a condition of economic constraint which they feel they cannot possibly bear. The condition of such a person hence, it is argued, falls into the category hinted at in several instances in the Qur'ān, thus lending support for such an attitude, as for instance: *No burden do we place on any soul, but that which it can bear* (Sūrat al-a'raf, Koran 7,42). For this reason, Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan's argument runs, it is impossible to include the practice of male sterilization among those that came into being through the deception of *shaiṭān*, for such a person acts so in order to protect himself from committing sins derived from his incapacity to face the expenses for the upbringing of further children. His act cannot therefore be equivalent to those mentioned in the Qur'anic verse quoted above with regard to the infidel polytheists whose actions were born out of the deception of *shaiṭān*.

The third position on which Abū'l-Ḥasan elaborates is that which holds that the practice of sterilization entails the equivalence with the condition of male sterility or female barrenness, a condition referred to by the Arabic term *'uqm* (dryness), whereas those who cannot have/bear children are referred to as *'aqīm/aqīma*, as sanctioned by the Qur'anic verse: *To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills. He bestows children male or female according to His will, or he bestows both males and females, and He leaves barren whom He will, for He is full of knowledge and power* (Sūrat al-shūrā, Koran 42,49-50). For many people, as far as the result and the inherent quality of such action is concerned, sterilization amounts to artificially causing the condition of being sterile or barren. Whoever between husband and wife is sterile or barren cannot possibly beget children. There is neither anything malfunction nor apparently any deformation in their sexual organs (*a'zā*), sexual relations between husband and wife remain outwardly unaffected by it. Those women who agree to undergo surgery for sterilization through and those men who agree to undergo surgery for vasectomy agree to become sterile and barren, so as to prevent them from having children. Apparently, it does not compromise in any way the relation between husband and wife. To conclude whether this method is to be judged, the jurists who dealt with this issue the question arose whether the capacity to bear children should be included among the divine favours (*fuyūd*, pl. of *faiḍ*) bestowed by God upon His creatures and one of the Divine attributes, and whether

those who opt for being sterilized hence put themselves in conflict with this favour. If so, this would be a clear sign of infidelity and, as such, result in being non-permissible. For Abū'l-Ḥasan, although this is true in a certain sense, it is necessary to reflect carefully before pronouncing oneself, because whoever relinquishes any of the divine favours or willingly excludes himself from it, if not outrightly stupid, would be asked for the reason why he had done such a thing. If he comes up with a bad reason, then he is blameworthy for committing a bad act, but if he has done so for any good reason then he surely is not blameworthy, nay if he has done such a thing with an important purpose in mind this is rightful and laudable (*mustahaqq*). According to an authentic Tradition, the quality of an action depends on the intention and act of will behind it, on the basis of what is confirmed by a famous *ḥadīth* narrated on the authority of *amīr al-mu'minīn* Abū Ḥafs 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who is reported as saying: *I heard the messenger of Allāh say: «Actions are according to intentions (bi'l-niyyati), and everyone will get what was intended»* (Umm 1999, *ḥadīth* 1). And also: *We did indeed offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains: but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish* (*Sūrat al-ahzāb, Koran 33,72*). Hence, after quoting these two powerful statements taken from the two primary sources of Islamic authority, Abū'l-Ḥasan concludes that a person that decides to undergo surgery for vasectomy cannot apparently be neither unjust nor foolish, nor is his intention in any way evil, so why should he be judged as bad and evil?

Here yet again emerges the surprisingly flexible mental attitude by Shāh Abū'l-Ḥasan, the author of the treatise that provided us with the basis and background for the considerations on the issue of birth-control and contraception made in the present article. Although far from being exhaustive on an issue that would require far more space and expert attention, it hopefully has been able to throw some light on the reasoning adopted by a respected *'ālim* who happens to be also a Sufi distinguished by a deep awareness of the human psyche. Thus, far from limiting himself to adopting the rigid categories of legalistic thinking, his procedure is permeated by that substratum of humanity that distinguishes those capable of combining their erudition in the external sciences (*'ulūm al-zāhir*) with the insight of those endowed with the subtle knowledge of the inner sciences (*'ulūm al-bāṭin*). The controversy whether or not it is licit in Islam to make recourse to different kinds of contraception in different circumstances and family-planning at large has been, still remains and probably will remain a disputed issue among Muslim scholars in South Asia and in the Islamic world at large. From what emerges by looking at the different positions held by different authorities in different historical and, perhaps, cultural contexts, the more generally prohibitive stances are often made by those who use this issue in the context of political and/or ideological discourse,



voicing their opinion in front of a general public and in the context of a public debate that is meant to preserve what is understood to be a set of Islamic values perceived as being under threat now as in the past from forces seen as hostile to Islam and Muslims.

It does therefore come as no surprise that the present investigation has led us to identify and point out the thread of continuity subsisting between the positions of intellectual heavyweights of the past, such as al-Ghazālī, and those of the present, such as the revered twentieth century Naqshbandi shaykh at Delhi. As authoritative representatives of their respective times, although separated by almost a millennium, they stand committed to put their balanced judgement and expertise in the manifold branches of knowledge (*'ilm*) to the service of addressing and answering the urgent problems of mankind through the lenses of perpetual actuality. In this perspective, they represent the middle way that quite naturally shuns any kind of extremism born out of superficiality and ignorance, the root of every kind of fundamentalism.

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# ***sLob dpon gyis bsad pa*: Explanation by the Master** The Teachings on Meditation of an Unknown Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ (IOL Tib J 709, 34a1-36a3)

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**Abstract** In the Dunhuang manuscript IOL Tib J 709, which is a collection of writings concerning meditation, we come across a short text attributed to a Tibetan master called Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ (allegedly eighth-ninth centuries CE). In his work, Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ exposes a method of meditation that seems to be strongly indebted to Indian Mahāyāna scriptural sources. Besides, also a Chinese Chan influence is here detectable. Therefore, the method of meditation taught by Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ seems to represent a commingling of different elements from different contexts. After a general introduction to the manuscript IOL Tib J 709, this study focuses on Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ's text, discussing and analysing the following topics: its author and date, the Indian Mahāyāna possible sources, Chinese Chan elements, the meditational path described. An annotated translation of the text, along with its transliteration and the reproduction of the fac-simile of the corresponding portion of the manuscript, concludes the study.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Manuscript IOL Tib J 709. – 2.1 IOL Tib J 709: General Survey. – 2.2 IOL Tib J 709 as a Collection: the Texts. – 2.3 IOL Tib J 709: the Date. – 3 The Text *Explanation by the ācārya Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ*. – 3.1 Preliminary Remarks. – 3.2 English Annotated Translation. – 3.3 Tibetan Text. – Appendix. Reproduction of the Fac-simile of the Manuscript.

**Keywords** Tibetan Buddhism. Dunhuang manuscript. Meditation.

## **1 Introduction**

In this paper<sup>1</sup> I will provide the edition and translation of a brief Tibetan text on meditation, along with an introductory study of the same and of the manuscript in which it is contained.

Sometimes history preserves for posterity some small things, saving them from the heedlessness of time and waiting that someone simply had

**1** I would like to express here my sincere gratitude to Dan Lusthaus, Dan Martin, Robert Mayer, Kirill Solonin and Sam van Schaik, who have thoroughly read and patiently discussed with me a first draft of the present article, offering insightful suggestions and helpful criticism. I am grateful to Sam van Schaik for having also sent me a copy of his book *Tibetan Zen* before it were available in Europe, and to Marek Mejer, who was kind enough to help me with some Sanskrit and Tibetan sources, unavailable to me.

the right eye to see and valorize them. This is the case, I think, of the work under concern here. It covers only few folios of a Dunhuang manuscript, catalogued as IOL Tib J 709, where nine different works or part of works are collected together, among which our text is the fifth.<sup>2</sup>

Its *incipit* makes it clear that it is a *bśad pa*, namely, an 'explanation' (for the sake of brevity, henceforth I will refer to this text as *Explanation*). According to the first statement, the *Explanation* collects some teaching attributed to a certain master (Tibetan *slob dpon*, Sanskrit *ācārya*), bearing the Tibetan name of Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ. At present nothing certain can be said about his origins and life, since it seems that nowhere else we meet with his name, and exactly this fact caught my attention and aroused my curiosity. Indeed, when I came across the *Explanation* for the first time, I was struck by the fact that, were it not for this manuscript, we would know nothing about Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ's teachings (even if, in any case, they do not express any particular innovative topic). Though the idea has touched me that the *Explanation* could be nothing but a simple collection of notes on meditation, arranged for some reason unknown to us, exactly the aforementioned lack of information on its author made me more and more involved in the study of the text, to the point that I decided to devote a paper to it.

## 2 The manuscript IOL Tib J 709

### 2.1 IOL Tib J 709: General Survey

IOL Tib J 709 is, as said above, a collection of nine texts, all dealing with, or concerning, the topic of meditation. The collection is fragmentary, since begins with page 4, and fols. 5, 6, 24 and 26 are missing.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the last text of the collection ends with page 45 and is incomplete. However, the beginning of the first text is found in IOL Tib J 468, which provides fols. 1 and 2 (see Gómez 1983, pp. 82-83). Consequently, also fol. 3 is to be considered lost. The final part of the last text of IOL Tib J 709 is instead found in IOL Tib J 667 (consisting in only 1 folio), which would correspond to page 46, though no Tibetan numeration does occur on it.

Accordingly, it is quite safe to assume that IOL Tib J 468, IOL Tib J 709 and IOL Tib J 667 are parts of what could have originally been one single manuscript.

2 For a general description of the other texts gathered in IOL Tib J 709, see Dalton, van Schaik (2006, pp. 302-306). More in general, as regards the Dunhuang Buddhist texts on meditation, it is worth mentioning here Ueyama (1981).

3 While referring to the page numbers of IOL Tib J 709, in the present article I will follow the Tibetan numeration of the manuscript.

As far as the lacunae in the manuscript are concerned, we owe to Luis Gómez (1983, pp. 82-83) the suggestion that the contents of the missing fol. 3 can be restored from, or can correspond to, Pelliot Tibétain 812, 813 and 117.

## 2.2 IOL Tib J 709 as a Collection: the Texts

Let us now turn our attention towards the contents of the manuscript. The following is the list of the nine texts gathered in the collection.

### 2.2.1 Text 1

The first work is the *bSam gtan cig car 'jug pa'i sgo* (The Gate of Immediate Entrance into Meditation), a Chan 禪 (translating Sanskrit *dhyāna*) treatise authored by the Chinese master Heshang Moheyan 和尚摩訶衍 (eighth century CE) – Ma-ha-yan according to the Tibetan spelling –, as we are told in IOL Tib J 468, 1a1: *mkhan po ma ha yan gl bsam gtan cig car 'jug pa'I sgo*.<sup>4</sup> The text begins in IOL Tib J 468, 1a1 and ends in IOL Tib J 709, 11a3. Moheyan was a partisan of the so-called 'immediate approach' (Tibetan *cig car 'jug pa*) to meditation and, according to the traditional account, he was defeated by Kamalaśīla, proponent of the 'gradual approach' (Tibetan *rim gyis 'jug pa*), in the formal debate king KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan wanted at bSam-yaś, in order to decide which among the two methods should become the official one in Tibet.<sup>5</sup> *The gate of immediate entrance into meditation* deals with the following main topics:

- a. introduction to the immediate approach (IOL Tib J 468, 1a1-2b5?);
- b. the 'no method' (*thabs myed*) approach is the Mahāyāna way of meditation (?- IOL Tib J 709, 4a3);
- c. meditation of the non-Buddhists (4a3-b3)
- d. meditation of the Śrāvakas (4b4-?);
- e. the *pāramitās* and meditation (7a4-b5);
- f. no need for extensive studies (*man du thos pa*) (7b5-8b4);
- g. the immediate access into the 'meditation of the *tathāgata*' (*de bźIn gśegs pa'I bsam gtan cIg car 'jug pa*) (8b4-9b1);<sup>6</sup>

4 This text has recently been translated by van Schaik (2015, pp. 141-145).

5 This well-known traditional account presents some problematic issues, since among the Dunhuang manuscripts we find texts narrating completely different facts, as for example the one discussed in van Schaik (2015, pp. 113-117). See also Meinert (2004, pp. 58-80), (2006).

6 The 'meditation of the *tathāgata*' (Chinese *rulai chan* 如來禪) is the highest of the four kinds of meditation listed in the *Lañkāvatārasūtra*. A particular line of transmission of the *Lañkāvatārasūtra*, according to tradition, was brought to China by Bodhidharma

- h. the non-conceptual meditation (*mI rtog par sgoms sig*) of the Madhyamakās (9b1-11a3).

## 2.2.2 Text 2

The second work covers IOL Tib J 709, 11a4-16a1. Its title is (11a4): *bSam gtan gI skyon rnams bstan pa'* (Teaching on the Mistakes of Meditation). No author is mentioned. The work is divided into five sections, each dealing with some problems that could impede the correct performance of meditation:

- a. the five obstacles (*bgegs rnam pa lña*) (11a4-b2);
- b. the five obstructions (*sgrIb pa lña*) (11b2-4);
- c. the five distractions (*g.yeñ pa rnam pa lña*) (11b4-12b5);
- d. the six defects (*skyon rnam pa drug*) (13a1-14b4);
- e. the four defects of wrong views (*log par lta ba'I skyon bži*), the names of which are provided both in Tibetan and Chinese transliteration (14b4-16a1).

## 2.2.3 Text 3

The third text covers IOL Tib J 709, 16a2-25b4. No author is mentioned and the title occurs at the end (25b4): *TSHaṅs la [=lha] phan sems kyis 'jam dpal la žus rdzogs so'* (Questions to Mañjuśrī by the Charitable God of the Brahmā Realm).<sup>7</sup> The text is in the form of a conversation between

(fifth-sixth centuries CE) and consequently this text became one of the most authoritative *sūtra* sources (together with, and besides, the *prajñāpāramitā* literature) in Chinese Chan Buddhism (see McRae 1986, pp. 15-29 and Adamek 2007, pp. 158-171). In the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* the meditation of the *tathāgata* is defined as follows (Vaidya 1963, p. 41): *tāthāgatabhūmyākārapraveśaṃ pratyātmāryajñānalakṣaṇatrayasukhavihārācintyasattvakṛtyakaraṇatayā tāthāgataṃ dhyānam* (The entrance into the disposition of the stage of the *tathāgata* by effecting the activities of the sentient beings [towards] the inconceivable abode of bliss of the three characteristics of the noble knowledge [originated] by itself, is the meditation of the *tathāgata*). On the interpretation of the term *pratyātma* see Ray (2006, p. 136). The three characteristics of the 'noble knowledge' are explained in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* as (Vaidya 1963, p. 23): *nirābhāsalakṣaṇaṃ sarvabuddhasvapraṇidhānādhiṣṭhānalakṣaṇaṃ pratyātmāryajñānagatilakṣaṇaṃ* (The characteristic [of being] without fallacious appearances, the characteristic of resting upon the self-resolutions [made] by all the Buddhas, the characteristic of going into the noble knowledge [originated] by itself).

<sup>7</sup> As far as this title is concerned, I assume that the *la* in *tshāṅs la phan sems* should be intended as an alternative spelling (occurring throughout all the text) for *lha*: *tshāṅs lha phan sems*. To my knowledge – and in support of this conjecture –, the expression *tshāṅs lha phan sems* is attested also in the title of a Mahāyāna *sūtra*, gathered in a bKa'-gyur collection from Batang, preserved in the Newark Museum (New Jersey). The contents of this bKa'-gyur have been examined by Skilling (2001). In the volume THa of the *sūtra* (mDo-bsde)

a god (or some gods) and Mañjuśrī, in which the former poses several questions to the latter. Mañjuśrī's replies focus both on doctrinal aspects and meditative practices. We can identify four main subjects;

- a. the god/s begin/s with a set of ten doubts under the topic *tathāgatabhūmi* (*yañ dag par gśegs pa'I sa'*)<sup>8</sup> (16a3-b5);<sup>9</sup>
- b. the second question introduces the topic of the means of the *tathāgata* (*yañ dag par gśegs pas thabs*) (19b1-3);<sup>10</sup>
- c. the third question concerns the root of birth and death (*skye śI'I rtsa ba*) (20a5);<sup>11</sup>
- d. in the following portion the effects of the practice of meditation, as explained so far by Mañjuśrī, are dealt with (21a5-23b2);<sup>12</sup>

section, the seventeenth text, covering folios 115a-116b, bears indeed the title *TSHAṅS lha phan sems kyi zus pa zes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo'* (Skilling 2001, p. 81). In September 2015 I had the opportunity to discuss this matter with Dan Martin, who pointed out that: «if we read *tshaṅs lha*, I'd suggest it might be a shortened version for 'gods of the pure abode' (*gnas gtsaṅ ma'i lha, śuddhāvāsakāyikadeva*)».

8 It is worth of note here the use of *yañ dag par gśegs pa*. Griffiths (1994, pp. 209-210, note 4) points out that this is an old Tibetan expression for *tathāgata*, apparently derived from the Chinese *rulai* 如來 (see Stein, 2010, pp. 23-24), which was progressively substituted by *de bzin gśegs pa*, an expression coined on the Sanskrit term, that - along with *yañ dag par gśegs pa* - occurs in this very text. However, it is to be pinpointed here that *rulai* 如來 clearly interprets *tathāgata* as *tathā-agata* ('thus come'; *lai* 來 meaning 'come'), whereas *gśegs pa* means 'gone, departed', so that both the Tibetan expressions *yañ dag par gśegs pa* and *de bzin gśegs pa* render *tathāgata* as *tathā-gata*.

9 IOL Tib J 709, 16a4-b5: *bar bar nI dri ma'I tshosg [=chos] gtsaṅ mar bśad | | bar bar nI gtsaṅ ma'I chos drI mar bśad | | [16b1] bar bar nI saṅs rgyas 'jig rten du 'byuñ ño zes bśad | | bar bar nI myI 'byuñ ño zes bśad | | bar bar nI saṅ [=saṅs] rgyas kyIs chos bśad do | | bar bar nI saṅs rgyas kyis chos ma bśad do | | bar bar nI mye [=mya] ñan las 'das pa yod par bśad | | bar bar nI mye [=mya] ñan las 'das ma myed par bśad | | bar bar nI sems can yod ces bśad | | bar bar ni sems can myed ces bśad na | | 'dI'i don jI ltar 'tshal bar bgyi' | | (Sometimes the impure *dharmas* are explained as pure; sometimes the pure *dharmas* are explained as impure; sometimes it is explained: 'the Buddha appeared in the world'; sometimes it is explained: 'he did not appear [in the world]'; sometimes the *dharma* is explained by the Buddha; sometimes the *dharma* is not explained by the Buddha; sometimes the *nirvāṇa* is explained as existent; sometimes the *nirvāṇa* is explained as non-existent; sometimes it is explained: 'sentient beings do exist'; sometimes it is explained: 'sentient beings do not exist'. Examine what is it the meaning of these [questions]). Mañjuśrī's explanations follows in 16b5-19b1.*

10 IOL Tib J 709, 19b2-3: *pha rol tu phyin pa drug ñes pa'I don lags sam ma lags | | (Is there or not an ultimate meaning of the six *pāramitās*?). Mañjuśrī's reply follows in 19b3-20a4.*

11 IOL Tib J 709, 20a5: '*dod chags ze sdañ gtI mug gI rañ bzin don du jI ltar blta'* | | (Let us consider what, in reality, the nature of attachment, aversion and delusion is). Mañjuśrī's explanation follows in 16b5-19b1.

12 IOL Tib J 709, 21a5-b1: *ji lta bur spyad na | dge sloñ gis de bzin gśegs [21b1] pa'I bstan pa 'phel rgyas par byas te myi žig par nus | | mñam sñoms pa dañ ma gal na | | chos ñId kyi ño bo ñId ma žig pa ste | | des bstan pa 'phel žIn rgyas par byas pa yin no | | (If he practices in this way, the *bhikṣu*, by progressing in the *tathāgata*'s teaching, is capable of [being] imperishable; if he is equanimous and non-compulsive, the nature of the *dharmatā* does*



- e. at this point it is Mañjuśrī that addresses himself directly to the Buddha, asking about the need to not being attached to awakening.<sup>13</sup>

Since fol. 24 is lost, we cannot know whether or not in the missing part there originally were some other topic discussed, though at a first sight it seems that in fol. 25 the discussion continues on the same subject interrupted in fol. 23, namely, the meditative practice leading to awakening (*byañ chub*).

#### 2.2.4 Text 4

The fourth text with all probability begins in the missing fol. 26 and ends in IOL Tib J 709, 33b1. For this reason we do not know if its title and/or the name of its author were mentioned in the *incipit*. Also in this case, as for the preceding one, the text is in form of a dialogue, between a querier (*'dri ba*) and a teacher (*ston pa*). The subject matters discussed here are advanced aspects of meditation, concerning the development of the *tathāgatagarbha* and of the comprehension of the *dharmatā*, as it can be argued by taking into consideration the querier's questions. Besides fol. 26, about which we can say nothing, the remaining questions deal with the following topics:

- the way to calm down conceptual constructions (*rtog pa*) in order to reach the elimination of sorrow (27b1-3);<sup>14</sup>
- the obstructions to the realization of the *tathāgatagarbha* (28a4-b1);<sup>15</sup>

not perish [in him] and he develops and expands the teaching). The discussion proceeds by considering other aspects and stages of the meditative training.

**13** IOL Tib J 709, 23b3: *de'i tshe chos kyi rgyal bu 'jams dpal kyis sañs rgyas la gsol pa' | |*. The discussion starts as follows (IOL Tib J 709, 23b3-4): *myI la la žig byañ chub don du gñer ba'I phyir | | smon lam 'debs pa nI rab du nor pa lags te | | yon po la spyod pa lags[ s]o | |* (Since certain men actually aspire to the awakening, [there are those] who cultivate the wish [for awakening], [but] being [such a wish] a complete error, there is unright practice).

**14** IOL Tib J 709, 27b1-3: *snod dan bcud kyi 'jIg rten nI | | thabs de ltar gnas pa' lags na' | | sems can rnams 'khrul pa'I dbañ gIs rtog pas 'khor na | | sañs rgyas kyi chos ji lta bu žig thugs su chud nas | | mye [=mya] ñan las 'das te | | sañs rgyas kyI che ba'I yon dan ldan | |* (When the container world and the inhabitants are established in such a method, if conceptual constructions [still] spin by means of the power of deception of the sentient beings, after having kept in mind what kind of Buddha's *dharma* does one possess the transcendence of sorrow and the great virtue of the Buddha?). The answer of the teacher follows in 27b4-28a3.

**15** IOL Tib J 709, 28a4-b1: *rtog pas ni khams gsum du 'khor | | myI rtog pas mye [=mya] ñan 'da' na | | sems can thams cad la yañ | | de bžin [28b1] gšegs pa'I sñiñ po rnam par dag pa mchIs pa lta na | | cI žig gis bsgrIbs te ma mthoñ | |* (If by means of conceptual constructions [there is not awakening, but] circulation in the three realms [of rebirth, whereas] by means of non-conceptuality there is passing into *nirvāṇa*, if there is the utterly pure *tathāgatagarbha* also

- c. the eternal marks of the *tathāgatagarbha* (29a4-b1);<sup>16</sup>
- d. the self emergence and inexpressibility of the *tathāgatagarbha* (29b4-30a2);<sup>17</sup>
- e. the gradual approach of the ten *pāramitās* and the ten *bhūmis* is delusional (30b5-31a2);<sup>18</sup>
- f. the explanation of the teaching concerning the attainment of the awakening by practicing sinful deeds (31b3-4);<sup>19</sup>
- g. the development of the comprehension of the *dharmatā* (32a2-3).<sup>20</sup>

## 2.2.5 Text 5

The fifth one is our text, covering IOL Tib J 709, 34a1-36a3, on which see section 3 below.

in all the sentient beings [and not only in the liberated ones, being] obstructed by means of what, does one not perceive [thus?]. The teacher's reply follows in 28b2-29a3.

**16** IOL Tib J 709, 29a4-b1: *de bZIn gSégs pa'I sñiñ po mtshan dan dpe' byad du ldan ba* | | *ye nas bdag la rdzogs* [29b1] *par mchIs na* | | *de bstan cIn luñ dbog par gsol* | | (The *tathāgatagarbha* possesses major and minor marks; if [these marks] exist completely in [the *tathāgatagarbha*] itself since ever, I ask about the instruction and the teaching of this). The teacher's reply follows in 29b1-3.

**17** IOL Tib J 709, 29b4-30a2: *de ltar khams sum 'khrul pas mthoñ ste* | | *dmyigs su myed pa lags na* | | *de bZIn gSégs pa'I sñiñ po* | | [30a1] *so so rañ gis rig pa ste bśad du ma mchis na'* | | *de bZin gSégs pas chos kyI sgo mo brgyad khrl bZl stoñ gsuñs pa jI'i slad du bka' stsal* | | (When one perceives in this way the deception of the three realms and there is non-apprehension, if the *tathāgatagarbha* is known by itself and therefore there is no explanation [by means of words, this state] is said [to be] the *tathāgata's* eighty-four thousand gates of *dharmā*: I ask which is the reason [of this]). The answer of the teacher follows in 30a2-b5. The expression *so so rañ gis rig pa* generally translates the Sanskrit *pratyātmavedanīya*.

**18** IOL Tib J 709, 30b5-31a2: *'o na bcom ldan 'das kyis* | | [31a1] *byañ cub sems dpa' rnamś la* | | *theg pa chen po'i chos* | | *pha rol du phyin pa bcu dan* | | *sa bcu'I rim pa bka' stsal pa yañ* | | *'khrul pa lags sam* | | (In that case, I ask also [about] the *dharmā* of the Mahāyāna [pro-pounded] by the Buddha and the *bodhisattvas*, the gradual [approach] of the ten *pāramitās* and of the ten *bhūmis*: are they delusional?). The teacher's reply follows in 31a2-b2.

**19** IOL Tib J 709, 31b3-4: *bcom ldan 'das kyis gsuñs pa'I mdo dag las* | | *mtshams myed pa lña spyad na* | | *byañ cub du mñon bar 'tshañ rgya 'o śes gsuñs pa de don ji lta bu* | | (In the *sūtras* taught by the Buddha it is said: indulging in the five inexpiable transgressions manifests the enlightenment of the *bodhi*. What is the meaning of that?). The teacher's answer covers fols. 31b4-32a2. The teaching concerning the attainment of the awakening by committing serious transgressions, such as murder and so on, occurs for instance in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* § 7.4: *pañcānantaryapṛāptaḥ śakto bodhicittam utpādayitum* (The one who is capable of accomplishing the five inexpiable transgressions can produce the mind of awakening).

**20** IOL Tib J 709, 32a2-3: *chos ñId kyañ spar bar bya na'* | | *chos ma yin pa lta ci smos śes ji lta bu* | | (If also the *dharmatā* is to be enhanced, how could one say that there is no *dharmā*? How is it?). The teacher's reply begins in 32a3 and continues till the end of the text.

## 2.2.6 Text 6

The sixth writing covers IOL Tib J 709, 36b1-41b1. It neither has a title, nor the author is mentioned. The text contains several instructions related to *śamatha* (*zI gnas*) and *vipaśyana* (*lhag mthon*) that can be summarized as follows:

- a. examples of the beginner practitioner's quivering of the mind (36b1-4);
- b. necessity to find a *kalyāṇamitra* (*bśes gñen*) (36b4-37a2);
- c. discussion of the methods for entering the 'meditation of the *tathāgata*' (*de bzin gśegs pas tIn ñe 'dzin*) (37a2-4);
- d. the cause (*rgyu*), the fruit (*'bral bu*), the actions (*las*), the obstacles (*bgegs*), the obstructions (*sgrib*), the ways (*lam*), the distractions (*sems kyl g.yeñ ba*) of/to *śamatha* and *vipaśyana* (37a4-39a4);<sup>21</sup>
- e. discussion of *śamatha* and *vipaśyana* in relation to the ten *bhūmis* (39a4-40b5);
- f. discussion on whether *śamatha* and *vipaśyana* are to be considered as one (*gcIg*) practice or as two separated (*tha dad pa*) practices (40b5-41b1).

## 2.2.7 Text 7

The seventh text covers IOL Tib J 709, 41b2-42a5 and is a very brief treatise on the non-duality (*gñIs su myed pa*) of method/means (*thabs*) and wisdom (*śes rab*). The opening sentence (*THabs dañ śes rab du ldan ba nI*) is probably the title. I provide the full translation here:<sup>22</sup>

The conjunction of method (*upāya*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).

Since [these] conceptions (*saṃjñā*) are unconceivable (*acintya*), [they are] inseparable: method and wisdom are related [to each other]. The method is to practice the *prajñāpāramitā* and so on, for the benefit of sentient beings. Not abiding in that very [practice] is wisdom. The

21 These subjects are respectively dealt with as follows: *rgyu* (37a4-5), *'bras bu* (37a5-b2), *las* (37b2-3), *bgegs* (37b3-38a1), *sgrib pa* (38a1-3), *lam* (38a4-b1), *sems kyl g.yeñ ba* (38b1-39a4).

22 IOL Tib J 709, 41b2-42a5: *thabs dañ śes rab du ldan ba nI || 'du śes bsam du myed pa la dbyer myed pa nI || thabs dañ śes rab zuñ du 'brel pa 'o || pha rol du phyin pa las stsogs pa | sems can gI don du spyod pa nI thabs so || pha rol du phyin pa las stsogs pa | sems can gI don du spyod pa nI thabs so || [42a1] de ñId la myi gnas pa ni śes rab bo || sems can yod par lta ba nI thabs so || sems can myi dmyigs pa nI śes rab bo || sems can yod pa dañ med par nyI lta ba nI || thabs dañ śes rab du ldan zIn 'brel pa 'o || rnam par dag pa'I dge ba' spyod pa nI thabs so || de'I 'bras bu la myi lta zIn lan myi re ba nI śes rab ro || chos ñId kyis spyod pa dañ | myI spyod pa la || gñIs su myed par śes na' || thabs dañ śes rab zuñ du 'brel pa 'o ||*

viewpoint of the existence of the sentient beings is the method. Non-apprehending the sentient beings [as existent] is wisdom. The viewpoint of both existence and non-existence of the sentient beings is [therefore] the connective relation of method and wisdom. To practice the perfectly pure virtue is the method. Not being concerned with the fruit of that [practice] and not hoping for [karmic] retribution is wisdom. When you know the non-duality of practicing and non-practicing by means of the *dharmatā*, [then] method and wisdom are related [to each other].

### 2.2.8 Text 8

Also the eighth text is very short, covering only IOL Tib J 709, 42b1-5. This is an explanation (*bśad pa*) containing the teachings of the master 'Gal-na-ya, as we are told in 42b1: *mkhan po 'gal na yas bsa[m] g{ta}n gl sñiñ po bśad pa'* (*Explanation of the essence of meditation by the teacher 'Gal-na-ya*).<sup>23</sup> The subject matter here is the 'immediate approach' to the meditation of the Madhyamaka (*dbu ma la cig car 'jug pa*). The complete translation of this short treatise is provided by van Schaik (2012, p. 7), to whom we owe also the identification of 'Gal-na-ya with the Indian master Haklenayaśas, who according to tradition would have been the twenty-third patriarch of Chan Buddhism and of whom we know almost nothing (see van Schaik 2012, p. 7, note 9). What is worth noting in this text, underscores van Schaik, is the presence of the Tibetan term *tshor*, which in the Chan context translates the Chinese *jue* 覺, meaning 'awareness'. This term occurs also in our text 1 – authored by Moheyan – and, as van Schaik remarks, its use with the meaning 'awareness' is typical of Chan, since: «*tshor ba* frequently appears in Tibetan Buddhist literature as a translation of a completely different term, *vedanā*» (2012, p. 8).<sup>24</sup>

23 As far as the Tibetan wording is concerned, I have corrected the phoneme *bas* in *bsam* (the square brackets indicate the addition of the *ma*); moreover, in the manuscript, the letter *ta* of the phoneme *gtan* is underwritten (to indicate this, I have used braces).

24 Dan Lusthaus, in a communication dated September 24th, 2015, explains: «*jue* 覺 is one of the Chinese terms used to translate *bodhi* when the transliteration *puti* 菩提 is not used. Its Chinese meaning is 'awaken, awakening, awakened', but due to Buddhist usage and the implications of *bodhi/buddhi*, it came to mean 'awareness' in the sense of knowing something. 'Awareness' is more typically rendered in Buddhist Chinese as *zhi* 知 or the related 智 (also pronounced *zhi*). The latter *zhi* is also used for *prajñā* and *jñāna*, and occasionally for *bodhi* as well. The first *zhi* 知 is sometimes used for *prajānāti*, *jñāna*; *mkhyen pa*, *rab tu śes pa*, etc.»

## 2.2.9 Text 9

The ninth text begins in IOL Tib J 709, 43a1 and ends in IOL Tib J 667, a5. We find its title in IOL Tib J 709, 43a1: *bSam gtan gl yI ge* (Meditation Document). Interestingly enough, the sentence we find immediately after the title sheds light on the epoch and the occasion of the compilation of this document: *lha brtsan po khri sron lde brtsan gl mgur gi phyag rgya 'og nas 'byun ba' ||* (The neck-seal of the divine king KHri-sron-lde-brtsan appears below).<sup>25</sup> KHri-sron-lde-brtsan reigned on Tibet during the second half of the eighth century CE and, accordingly, this text might have seen the light in the same period. Although there is no agreement among scholars on whether also the section beginning in IOL Tib J 709, 45a2 and ending in IOL Tib J 667, a5 should be taken as a part of the same text or not,<sup>26</sup> the recent translation provided by Sam van Schaik (2015, pp. 159-161) shows undoubtedly that this is a single text. Considered the homogeneity and consistency of the discussion in IOL Tib J 709, 43a1-45a1, and considered also that in 45a2 a completely different topic is introduced, the text seems to be divided into two main parts. In its first section, hence, the *Meditation Document* deals mainly with the meditation of the *tathāgata* (*de bZIn gSégs pa'I bSam gtan*) and takes into consideration:

- a. the approaches (*sgo mo*) (43a2);
- b. the deep states (*mtha'*) (43a5);
- c. its excellence (*dge*) (43b3);
- d. the precepts/instructions (*luñ*) (43b4);
- e. and the full immersion into it (*rjes su 'jug pa*) (44b4).

Mention is made also of *sems tsam*, *cittamātra* in Sanskrit (44b1), and, besides that, the occurrence here of the expression *rnal 'byor chen po / rnal 'byor chen po ba*, corresponding to Sanskrit *mahāyoga/mahāyogin*, is particularly worth of note (see IOL Tib J 709, 43a1-2, 43b4,5). The presence of such a term could suggest that this text is melting elements from Chan and from the tantric rDzogs-chen tradition, in which *mahāyoga* refers to a particular meditative practice, distinct from *anuyoga* and *atiyoga*. I am however of the opinion that this is not the case and that, instead, we are here in presence of a non-tantric treatise on meditation. The principal point I can offer to corroborate this perspective is the explicit reference to the *Lañkāvatārasūtra* in 43a3 (*'PHags pa lañ kar gSégs pa'I luñ*), together with the occurrence of the term *sems tsam* in 44b1, which points at the

25 On *mgur gi phyag rgya* see Stein (1983, p. 153, note 13). The expression somehow indicates that the text was compiled with the approval of KHri-sron-lde-brtsan.

26 According to Dalton, van Schaik (2006, p. 306) this is one single text. On the contrary, de la Vallée Poussin (1962, entry 709, section 7) accepts the text beginning in IOL Tib J 709, 45a2 as a different work. Interestingly enough, later on van Schaik (2008, p. 28, note 119) recognized the possibility that de la Vallée Poussin's opinion could be plausible.

'mind-only' theory. This fact leads us to assume that the *Meditation Document* is, at least partially, based on, or inspired by, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* teachings (that were so central in the constitution of the Chinese Chan). In the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* we meet with few occurrences of *mahāyoga/mahāyogin*, which in this context convey however the simple meaning of 'great practice/practitioner of *yoga*', without any particular tantric nuance.<sup>27</sup> These observations, I suggest, concur to support the hypothesis that also in the *Meditation Document* the terms *mahāyoga/mahāyogin* may have been employed having in mind the semantic framework they have in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. The second section of the *Meditation Document* begins in IOL Tib J 709, 45a2 and ends in IOL Tib J 667, a5. It opens with the following question: *dam tshIg ji ltar blañ ze na* || (How will one receive the commitments?). The commitments (*dam tshIg*), *samaya* in Sanskrit, are a practice strongly related to the tantric Vajrayāna Buddhism, so apparently in this section there could be a commingling of teachings on meditation (maybe Chan) and tantric influence. However, to substantiate such a perspective, we have no stronger evidence than the simple presence of the word *dam tshIg*, which is in itself not entirely decisive. Indeed, the answer to the opening question seems to consist in two points: a. one should rely upon the Buddha (45a2-3);<sup>28</sup> b. and one should not investigate the ordinary misconceptions (45a4),<sup>29</sup> which are both quite common

27 At this same conclusion arrived also van Schaik (2015, pp. 62-63, 152-153), who suggests that the *mahāyoga* here should be intended as a teaching on *tathāgata* meditation. Seven occurrences of *mahāyoga/mahāyogin* can be detected in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. In most cases we find the compound *mahāyogayogin*, 'the great *yogin/practitioner of yoga*'. The 'great *yogin/practitioner*', tells us the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, is endowed with four characteristics (Vaidya 1963, p. 34): *caturbhir mahāmate dharmaiḥ samanvāgatā bodhisattvā mahāyogayogino bhavanti | katamais̄ caturbhiḥ yad uta svacittadr̥syavibhāvanatayā ca utpādasthitibhaṅgadṛṣṭivivarjanatayā ca bāhyabhāvābhāvopalaḥṣaṇatayā ca svapratyātmārya-jñānādhighamābhilakṣaṇatayā ca* | (O Mahāmati, provided with four *dharma*s the *bodhisattvas* become great *yogins of yoga*. Which four? In this way: [provided] with the discrimination of what is experienced by one's own mind, with the abandonment of the view of origination, permanence and destruction, with the observation of the non-existence of the external events, with the aim to accomplishing the noble knowledge [originated] by itself).

28 IOL Tib J 709, 45a2: *snön sañs rgyas mañ po la | mchod bkur pa dañ | | bsam ba yoñs su dag pa'I rñams kyis | | slob dpon sañs rgyas la rten gyi | | gžan la myi brten par bya 'o | |* (Those who have firstly provided offerings to the many Buddhas and have immaculate intention [should] rely upon the *ācārya*-Buddha [or: the *ācārya* and the Buddha ?], they should not rely upon others). As underlined by van Schaik (2008, p. 28): «In the answer we may detect a similarity to the first root vow of the Mahāyoga *samaya*, which enjoins the veneration of the guru». On the *samaya* vow in *mahāyoga* see van Schaik (2010).

29 IOL Tib J 709, 45a4: *chos myi skye myi 'gog pa'I don chud par blo bya 'I | | 'khrul las | sgro btags pa'I tha sñad sna tshogs myi bslab bo | |* (You should make the mind penetrate the meaning of the non-arising and non-perishing of the *dharma*, and not learn the various conventional fabrications, [which originate] out of deception). Concerning this passage, van Schaik (2008, p. 28) argues that it «enjoins the trainee to avoid any conventional practices

arguments in almost all the Buddhist traditions and are not peculiar to Vajrayāna. Moreover, it is worth of note that the term *samaya* occasionally occurs also in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and in the *prajñāpāramitā* texts (which played a fundamental role in Chan Buddhism).<sup>30</sup> However, in the first case the term seems to be used mainly with the meaning of ' [right] time, occasion' or, more rarely, of 'clear understanding' (as an abbreviated form of *abhisamaya*), whereas in the *prajñāpāramitā* literature it occurs in the expression *samayapratipanna*, conveying the sense of *sāmīcī*, 'agreement', thus corresponding to the Tibetan term *mthun pa* (the translation of *samayapratipanna*, which is a *bahuvrīhi* compound, could then be something like: 'one who is arrived at the agreement [with the *dharmā*]').<sup>31</sup> The matter therefore remains unclear and further studies are needed in order to clarify the meaning and the function according to which *dam tshig* is used in this text.<sup>32</sup>

based on intellectual analysis, which may be loosely linked to the theme of practice in the second of the Mahāyāna root *samaya*».

**30** On the influence of the *prajñāpāramitā* scriptures on Chinese Chan see, among others, Adamek (2007, pp. 166-167, 200-201).

**31** As far as this topic is concerned, it is worth noting that in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* the relevant passages involving *samaya* are verse 6.16 (=10.827): *sthitayaḥ prāptidharmās ca buddhānāṃ jñānasamṛpaḥ | bhikṣutvaṃ samayaprāptir dṛṣṭā vai kṣaṇikā katham ||* (Abiding are the *dharmas*-obtaining and [what is] furnished with the knowledge of the Buddhas; obtaining in the right moment the condition of a *bhikṣu* is certainly manifested, how could [it] be momentary?); and 10.320cd: *ekānupūrvasamayam siddhāntam ekam eva ca ||* (The clear understanding is either immediate or gradual, [but] the final purpose is only one). On the *prāptidharmas* see, for instance, Vasubandhu's (fourth century CE) *Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa*, in Anaker (1998, p. 70). Moreover, *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Kimura 1986-2009, 5, p. 1): *sa taṃ dharmam śrutvā tasya dharmasyārtham ājanāti dharmānudharmapratipanno viharati samayapratipanno'nudharmacārī |* (He, having heard this *dharma*, understands the meaning of the *dharma*, abides [as one who is] arrived at the true method of the *dharma*, [who is] arrived at the agreement [with the *dharma*], a practitioner of the true method). This is the only occurrence of the compound *samayapratipanna* I was able to identify in the Sanskrit versions of the *prajñāpāramitā* texts at my disposal. The following is the corresponding Tibetan version (Lhasa bKa'-'gyur, Ņi-khri, Ga, 21b3-4): *des chos de thos nas | chos de'i don śes par bya'o źes chos dañ | gñer ba'i chos la źugs śiñ gnas pa dañ | mthun par źugs te gñer ba'i thos la spyod pa mthoñ na |*. Compare this sentence with a similar one occurring in the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Conze 1962-1974, 1, p. 3): *sa taṃ dharmam śrutvā tasya dharmasya artham ājñāsyāmi iti iti dharmānudharmapratipanno viharati sāmīcīpratipanno'nudharmacārī*. On *dharmānudharma* see Edgerton (1998, p. 27).

**32** Interestingly enough, as noticed by Dalton, van Schaik (2006, p. 306), the passage corresponding to IOL Tib J 709, 38b2-5, IOL Tib J 667, a1-4, occurs also in IOL Tib J 710, 5a1-b4. In this latter manuscript mention is made of *rnal 'byor chen po pa*, that is, *mahāyogin* (Dalton, van Schaik 2006, p. 307). On the basis of our discussion of text 9, could it perhaps be the case that also in IOL Tib J 710 the *mahāyogin* is to be assumed with the same sense it has in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*?

### 2.3 IOL Tib J 709: the Date

In order to shed light on the possible date of our manuscript, let us begin by the following preliminary consideration. All the Dunhuang manuscripts have been written between the Tibetan conquest of Dunhuang, in the second half of the eighth century CE,<sup>33</sup> and the moment the caves were walled up, at the beginning of the eleventh century. Such a span of three centuries can be in its turn divided into two main periods: the so-called imperial (from mid-eighth to mid-ninth century) and the post-imperial (after mid-ninth century).

As regards the date of IOL Tib J 709, moreover, two different approaches must be undertaken: a. on the one hand, the one concerning the dates of the single texts collected in the manuscript, b. on the other hand, the one concerning the date of the compilation of the manuscript itself.

- a. At least two of the texts gathered in IOL Tib J 709 can receive a proper collocation in time. These are, as we have seen, the work of Heshang Moheyan (text 1) and the text in which «the neck-seal of the divine king KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan» is said to appear (text 9). These two writings were originally compiled in the second half of the eighth century CE, since both Moheyan and KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan flourished in that epoch. We cannot be sure whether also the other texts saw the light in the same period or not, however their inclusion in a manuscript that contains works of the eighth century, and the fact that they mainly deal with topics related to meditation (some of them clearly of Chan origins), without any definitive and certain clue pointing at more sophisticated doctrinal developments, could testify that, they too, belong to an early stage of Tibetan history. This dating could perhaps be confirmed also for the *Questions to Mañjuśrī by the Charitable God of the Brahmā Realm* (text 3), where it occurs the expression *yañ dag par gśeḡs pa*, the ancient Tibetan rendering for *tathāgata*, which was in later times superseded by *de bzin gśeḡs pa*.
- b. In order to date the manuscript, on the other hand, we shall have recourse to a palaeographic approach. The calligraphic style mainly used in IOL Tib J 709 is a headed one (*dbu can*) typical of the Buddhist manuscripts. As remarked by van Schaik, the manuscripts written in this calligraphy «are among the most difficult to date on stylistic grounds» (2014, p. 320). Our IOL Tib J 709 contains, however, the important characteristic of the post-imperial headed styles, namely, the so-called 'wave shape': the descending strokes

33 The date for the Tibetan conquest of Dunhuang traditionally accepted is 786/787 CE. However, on the basis of more recent research, Horlemann (2002) argued that the conquest should have taken place between 755 and 777 CE.



of letters such as *ga*, *na*, *za* and the *śad* are written with a sort of wave towards the right (see van Schaik 2013, pp. 122-123). Also the few lines written in a headless (*dbu med*)<sup>34</sup> style that we meet with, confirm that the epoch of compilation of IOL Tib J 709 is the post-imperial period (see van Schaik 2014, pp. 321-323). Consequently, the manuscript, though it contains texts dating from the second half of the eighth century CE, may have been written down between the mid-ninth and the beginning of the eleventh century, and perhaps it saw the light in the tenth century (see van Schaik 2014, pp. 327-28).

### 3 The Text *Explanation by the ācārya Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ*

#### 3.1 Preliminary Remarks

##### 3.1.1 The Author and His Possible *floruit*

The *Explanation*, as said above, is the fifth text of the collection of writings on meditation IOL Tib J 709, of which it covers the fols. 34a1-36a3 (according to the Tibetan numeration). It contains the teachings of a master (*slob dpon*), whom we know only by name: Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ. Though at present we know nothing more than his name, in what follows I will try to put forward some reflections concerning Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ's origins and the period he flourished. Of course, only further scriptural findings will confirm (or refute) these considerations that, therefore, have for the moment the nature of simple conjectures.

Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ probably was of Tibetan or, less probably, of Indian origins. In the latter case, his original Sanskrit name could have been either \*Bodhināgendra, \*Bodhināgeśvara or also \*Bodhināgeśa, and the like. At first glance, however, such renderings sound quite odd, since Indian compounded names containing the word *nāga* generally have it as first part of the compound, as we can notice from, for instance, the (partially identical) name of Nāgabodhi. Nāgārjuna, Nāgasena, Nāgadatta and so on follow the same rule. A more 'natural' form of our author's possible Sanskrit name would then be \*Nāgēndrabodhi, or \*Nāgeśvarabodhi and the like. On the basis of this premise, hence, we should conjecture that in the present case it took place an inversion of the name elements in the Tibetan translation of the same, which is of course not impossible to have happened but seems at least quite unusual. To my knowledge such an inversion never occurs

<sup>34</sup> In IOL Tib J 709 the headless calligraphy is used in: a. fol. 19b2, underwritten insertion of *yañ dag pa'i*; b. fol. 44, the entire line 5 is in headless style: *cl'i phyr ze na || nañ du thub pa la 'jug du 'dra ba las || theg pa gžan gyI bsam gtan tsam gyis | sems can gyI don chen po myI nus kyis | |*.

for other similar Sanskrit names. Indeed, and by way of example, let us consider for instance Nāgabodhi, whose Tibetan equivalent is kLu'i-byañ-chub, which is never rendered as Byañ-chub-klu. The same with Nāgārjuna, always translated as kLu-grub in Tibetan and never as Grub-klu, and so on. This observation, though not decisive in itself, raises in any case the suspect that our author may not have been Indian.

It is also quite improbable for Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ to be the Tibetan rendering of a Chinese name, if we assume that Tibetan Dunhuang sources generally tend to transcribe, rather than to translate, the names of Chinese masters (as in the case of Tibetan Ma-ha-yan < Chinese Moheyan). Moreover, a Chinese equivalent of Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ would sound, as it were, quaint for a Chinese, if we conjecture a possible original Jue Longwang 覺龍王 or Puti Longwang 菩提龍王. Besides the fact that Longwang 龍王 or also Dalongwang 大龍王 seem to have more the shape of honorific titles than of personal names – consequently, in this case the personal name would be 覺/菩提-, it remains that the entire appellation appears to be more suitable for a divinity or spiritual entity, than for a human being or a teacher.<sup>35</sup> This observation too, though not entirely decisive, as the previous one, leads us to doubt also of a possible Chinese origin of Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ.

To these considerations, furthermore, we should add that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ has the form of a typical Tibetan 'religious' name, that is, a name given in consequence of religious ordination, and such an assumption can go in support of the hypothesis of his Tibetan origins. Yet, the presence of the klu-dbañ element, which is quite uncommon for Tibetan names, complicates a bit the matter. However, it is here worth noting that it occurs in the name of kLu'i-dbañ-po from 'KHon, who is listed – even if not unanimously – by several sources among the 'seven men to be tested' (*sad mi mi bdun*), that is, the first seven Tibetan Buddhist monks, ordained in the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* by Śāntarakṣita during the reign of king KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan, in the second half of the eighth century CE. What is relevant to pinpoint, here, is the fact that by certain Indian and Tibetan traditions we are told that the preceptor, during the ordination, used to give part of his own name to the ordinands. This seems to have happened also in the case of Śāntarakṣita and kLu'i-dbañ-po, since the latter was ordained as kLu'i-dbañ-po-sruñ-ba, sruñ-ba being the Tibetan for rakṣita. On the basis of such considerations, there is hence a weak (and unconfirmed) possibility

35 I am grateful to Dan Lusthaus for having clarified to me several aspects concerning the possible Chinese name of Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ. For the sake of completeness, it is worth mentioning here an excerpt from a communication dated September 24th, 2015, where he writes: «no such name appears anywhere in the Chinese canon or Dunhuang Chinese sources available to me. [...] If one is looking for a Chan allusion in the name, perhaps it is attempting to connote a connection to Bodhidharma, replacing -dharma with 'Naga king', possibly under the impression that a Bodhi-X brought Chan to China and so a different Bodhi-X would be affiliated with that teaching».

that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ could be the name of one of kLu'i-dbañ-po-sruñ-ba's ordinands.<sup>36</sup> If this is admitted, he should have flourished straddling the eighth and the ninth centuries, which is in itself a date not so implausible, considered the assumptions put forward above, on account of the date of the manuscript.

### 3.1.2 The Title

As far as the text is concerned, its first sentence (*slob dpon byañ cub klu dbañ gis bśad pa'*) may be taken as a title. Its structure reminds us, indeed, of the *incipit* of another work contained in IOL Tib J 709, namely, text 8 (*mkhan po 'gal na yas bsa[m] g{ta}n gl sñiñ po bśad pa'*), which is, as we have seen, an explanation or exposition of some Haklenayaśas' teachings. Unlike the text attributed to Haklenayaśas, which is all in prose, however, our *Explanation* seems to mix up parts in verses and parts in prose. It may be also observed that it is impossible to know with certainty whether these two works have been written directly by the two teachers, of whom they contain the respective instructions, or by some other person, such as a pupil or the like.

### 3.1.3 The Contents

Regarding the teachings collected in the *Explanation*, the discussion is organized as follows:

1. 34a1: introduction;
2. 34a1-2: definition of the true speech (*satyavacana*) of a *bodhisattva*;
3. 34a3-4: reference to the practice of equality (*samatā*) and satisfaction (*āsvāda*);
4. 34a4: reference to the practice of keeping under control both senses and breath;
5. 34a4-5: reference to the meditation that leads to the state without support for attention;
6. 34a5-b2: definition of the *bodhisattva*'s mind;

<sup>36</sup> I had the occasion to discuss this topic with Dan Martin, to whom I owe the hypothesis – which remains of course nothing more than a hypothesis, until some more decisive proof comes to substantiate it – of the bond between Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ and kLu'i-dbañ-po-sruñ-ba, and who provided me also with some interesting bibliographic material. As far as the inclusion of kLu'i-dbañ-po-sruñ-ba among the 'seven men to be tested' (*sad mi mi bdun*) is concerned, it is to be remarked that there are still problems on the matter, since some sources do not record his name in the list. On this particular subject I refer here the reader to van der Kuijp (2013). On the habit of conferring part of the ordinator's name to the ordinand(s), see van der Kuijp (2013, pp. 185-189), Martin (2013, p. 241, note 5).

7. 34b2-3: definition of inexpressibility;
8. 34b3-4: definition of the mindfulness of the *dharmatā*;
9. 34b4: definition of what is inexpressible;
10. 34b5-28a1: description of the practice that leads to the non-forgetfulness of mindfulness;
11. 35a1-2: definition of skillfulness in means concerning wisdom;
12. 35a2: reference to the practice that leads to equality;
13. 35a2-4: description of the method for obtaining the pure sight on reality;
14. 35a4-5: instructions for attaining wisdom through meditation;
15. 35a5-b1: reference to a passage taken from a *sūtra* (this could be the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*);
16. 35b1-3: reference to an instruction on the noble self-knowing knowledge (*svapratyātmāryajñāna*), derived from the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*;
17. 35b3-5: definition of what distracts from meditation and mental concentration;
18. 35b5-36a1: identification of the preceding distractions with what is not *prajñāpāramitā*;
19. 36a1-3: definition of the four perfect deportments (*īryāpatha*) in apophatic terms, as the state of suppression of all mental fabrications; end.

### 3.1.4 The Mahāyāna Background

From this sketch it emerges that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ outlined his perspective under a strong influence of the *prajñāpāramitā* viewpoint. The analysis of the *Explanation* reveals also its indebtedness to the *Lañkāvatārasūtra* (and its Yogācāra related developments). This latter text, as said above, is a central work for the Chinese Chan tradition, traces of which, as we will see in a while, can possibly be found also in the *Explanation*. This leads us to suggest that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ with all probability upheld a sort of – as it were – heterogeneous perspective on meditation, melting together concepts from different contexts.

Some among the relevant ideas he may have borrowed from the *Lañkāvatārasūtra* tradition are the metaphor of the mind as a mirror and the self-originated knowledge revealing the *tathāgatagarbha* (though in the *Explanation* this last concept is said to be derived from the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, which is indeed mentioned as textual source). From the *prajñāpāramitā* tradition, on the other hand, he could have assumed both the idea of true speech as prerequisite to meditation and the concept of a non-rooted mind. He could perhaps have been inspired by the *prajñāpāramitā* tradition also for the meditative methods

of equality and satisfaction, though traces of these are present in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* as well.

Other textual clues allow us to suppose that Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ could have been acquainted with doctrinal traditions referring to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*, the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, the *Rāṣṭrapālapariṣcchāsūtra* and so on.

Moreover, there is also a (remote) possibility that the author of the *Explanation* had made recourse to the concept of *paramātman*, which he might have met with in teachings on meditation originally contained in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and related traditions.

The scriptural and doctrinal framework, which the *Explanation* relies upon, seems hence to be highly indebted to the Sanskrit sources of the Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. Besides this, as we will see in the next sections, the text most likely contains also several Chinese Chan elements.

### 3.1.5 Possible Clues for the Chan ‘immediate Approach’

Interestingly enough, in the *Explanation* there are textual clues – not much strong, to say the truth – that could point to the so-called ‘immediate approach’ of Chan Buddhism. We may particularly notice that the grasping of the *dharmatā* is here compared to a state, in which one «is mindful without being mindful or conceives without conceiving» (34b3-4: *dran ba myed ciñ dran ba’am* | | *dmyigs pa myed ciñ dmyigs pa’o* | |). This kind of expressions, of the ‘doing by non-doing’ type, even though already detectable for instance in the *prajñāpāramitā* texts, are quite typical of the ‘immediate’ Chinese Chan method of meditation, as it is witnessed by the following passage, which I quote here by way of example. It is taken from the *Xuemo lun* 血脈論 (*Treatise on the blood-vessel*), a text traditionally attributed to Bodhidharma (sixth century CE), but with all probability authored by a later Chan writer – perhaps affiliated either to the Hongzhou 洪州 or to the Niutou 牛頭 schools –, allegedly in the ninth century CE: «Moving, yet without having moved; all day he goes away, but he is never gone; all day he sees, but is never seen; all day he hears, but is never heard; all day he knows, but is never known; all day he delights, but is never delighted; all day he acts, but is never active; all day he abides, but has never abided».<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> The translation was kindly provided to me by Dan Lusthaus. The following is the Chinese text, as edited in Xuzangjing, vol. 63, no. 1218, 5a15-18: 動而無所動，終日去來而未曾去，終日見而未曾見，終日笑而未曾笑，終日聞而未曾聞，終日知而未曾知，終日喜而未曾喜，終日行而未曾行，終日住而未曾住。For a general survey of the *Treatise on the blood-vessel* see Buswell, Lopez (2014, p. 1016).

## 3.1.6 Mind or No Mind?

The method, which the *Explanation* hints at in order to reach the mental absorption into the profound awareness leading to a – so to speak – ‘knowledge without knowledge’ state, seems to involve a process that points at the absence of any frame of mind (34a4: *bag myed*) and of whatever support for attention (34a4-5: *bag bya gnas myed*). Even if it may be not an identical concept, what Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ expresses with *bag myed* – if I understand it well – reminds us of the so-called ‘no thought’ (Chinese *wunian* 無念) or ‘no mind’ (Chinese *wuxin* 無心) practice of early Chinese Chan,<sup>38</sup> which served as a basis for what I have called the ‘doing by non-doing’ method. To outline the fundamental ideas lying behind this kind of meditation, we can here refer in brief to the following three excerpts from two texts belonging to the Niutou school. The first passage is taken from the *Wuxin lun* 無心論 (Treatise on No Mind) traditionally attributed to Bodhidharma, but undoubtedly authored by a later scholar: «‘No mind’ itself is practice. There is no other practice».<sup>39</sup> And the other two passages are both from the *Jueguan lun* 絕觀論 (Treatise on Cutting Off Discernment), composed in the eighth century CE: «If there is no contemplation there is no mind, and no mind is the true Way»;<sup>40</sup> and: «If you fully understand no mind, there is no positing of comprehension».<sup>41</sup> In particular, this last sentence is worth of note, since it expresses the idea of a knowledge that ends up in a non-knowledge, a concept that recalls closely the practice of being mindful without being mindful or conceiving without conceiving, which the *Explanation* speaks of.

Be it as it may, what is relevant here to stress is, however, the fact that the perspective put forward in the *Explanation* seems not to be so radical in affirming a definitive ‘no mind’ theory. Indeed, the aforementioned ideas of *bag myed* and *bag bya gnas myed* do not fall eventually within an absolute ‘no mind’ framework, rather they are dealt with as necessary steps towards the development of a luminous mind (34b1: *sems kyi 'od*), which is positively described as pure and radiant (34b1: *dag cin spro ba'I sems*).

38 On this particular topic, see, among others, Scharf (2014, pp. 945-950).

39 無心即是修行。更不別有修行。Chinese text and translation in Scharf (2014, pp. 946-947).

40 無念即無心。無心即真道。Chinese text and translation in Scharf (2014, p. 947).

41 若了無心。設思惟亦無。Chinese text and translation in Scharf (2014, p. 948). I owe to the kindness of Dan Lusthaus the following alternative English rendering: «If you discern no mind [lit. ‘absence of mind’], then speculative thought is also absent».

### 3.1.7 Different Methods of Meditation

It seems that the *Explanation* upholds the idea, according to which the meditational practice upheld here can be undertaken by means of different methods (*thabs*), since the text admits at least the meditation pointing at equality (Sanskrit *samatā*) and the one pointing at satisfaction (Sanskrit *āsvāda*) (34a3-4). This viewpoint seems to be in line with what we can read in text 4 of IOL Tib J 709, where the same concept is explained by way of the example of the physician, who relies upon only one science for the exercise of his work, even though he can use different remedies in order to heal the different diseases of his patients.<sup>42</sup> The admittance of different methods in the 'immediate approach' leads us to suppose, moreover, that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ did not share the perspective of, for instance, both Haklenayaśas – that we know from text 8 of IOL Tib J 709, and according to which: *cIḡ car 'jug pa la nI thabs myed de ||* (The immediate approach has no method) – and Moheyan, who was, as is well-known, a propounder of the 'no method' (*thabs myed*) in meditation.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.1.8 Is There a Reference to Kim Heshang's Chan Teachings Embedded in the *Explanation*?

In the light of the conclusion just drawn in the preceding section, it is interesting to remark now that in the *Explanation* we come across three particular expressions that remind us very closely of the teachings of a Chan monk of Korean origins. He was known either by the Chinese name Wuxiang 無相, or by his Korean name, Kim (Jin 金 in Chinese), to which the appellation Heshang 和尚 is generally added. Kim Heshang 金和尚 (684-762 CE) is reputed to have been the founder of the Jingzhong 淨冢 school of Chan, based in the Chengdu area. He is mentioned in some Dunhuang and extra-Dunhuang manuscripts (variably, as Kim-hun/-hu, Gyim Hwa-śañ, etc.) and in particular his name occurs in the *dBa'/sBa bžed* (*Testament of dBa'/sBa*), a chronicle of the entrance of Buddhism in Tibet attributed to a certain dBa'/sBa gSal-snañ, reputedly a member of king KHri-sron-ldebrtsan's retinue. Interestingly enough, the *Testament of dBa'/sBa* narrates that Tibetans first received the Chinese Chan teachings from Kim Heshang

<sup>42</sup> The passage containing this particular example is translated in Dalton, van Schaik (2006, p. 304).

<sup>43</sup> For Haklenayaśas see van Schaik (2012, p. 7 and note 10). Moreover, as we have seen, Moheyan devoted part of his writing that opens IOL Tib J 709 to the topic of 'no method'.

in person.<sup>44</sup> Even though we cannot know whether this witness is actually reliable or not, it remains the fact that both Chinese and Tibetan sources more or less agree in telling us that the gist of Kim Heshang's instructions on meditation is contained in his so-called 'three phrases': 'no-recollection' (Chinese *wuyi* 無憶), 'no-thought' (Chinese *wunian* 無念) and 'not forgetting' (Chinese *mowang* 莫忘).<sup>45</sup> As we have seen, such kinds of negative concepts are quite typical of Chinese Chan doctrines. However, what is worth of note here – and it might very well not be a mere coincidence – is that in the *Explanation* there occur three expressions, which seem to be an actual calque of Kim Heshang's 'three phrases'. These are: *dran ba myed* (34b3), *dmyIgs pa myed* (34b4) and [*dran ba*] *myI brjed pa* (34b4-5), meaning respectively 'without being mindful', 'without conceiving/thinking' and 'non-forgetfulness [of being mindful]'. Such a terminological parallelism could represent a concrete textual witness of a Chinese Chan influence on the *Explanation* and, in particular, of an early version of Chan, dating back to the eighth century CE. If we admit this suggestion, since, on the one hand, Kim Heshang flourished during KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan's epoch and, on the other hand, his presence in Tibetan texts seems to have faded away in a short time, this could corroborate the aforementioned hypothesis, according to which Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ flourished not later than the first half of the ninth century CE.

### 3.1.9 The *Bodhisattva* Path

Drawing from such a diversified doctrinal background, the *Explanation* sketches a clear *bodhisattva* path, in which we can detect some clues pointing at practices or features that are specific of particular *bhūmis* or stages of meditation as they are described in the Indian Mahāyāna literature. In what follows I summarize the fundamental steps of this path. When possible, in order to help the reader find the – as it were – meditational moment that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ might have had in mind, I have also indicated in brief the corresponding *bhūmi*, on the basis mainly of the treatment in the *Śatasahāsrīkaprajñāpāramitā* (a text explicitly mentioned in the *Explanation*) and the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (which is, as is well-known, a reference text as far as this topic is concerned).

44 For the 'episode' of Kim Heshang in the *Testament of dBa'/sBa* (where his name is written Gyim Hwa-saṅ) see Wangdu, Diemberger (2000, pp. 47-52). In Pelliot Tibétain 116, moreover, his name occurs as Kim-hun; see Horlemann (2012, pp. 118-119).

45 On the 'three phrases' and their interpretation see Adamek (2007, pp. 205-207, 246, 338). These 'three phrases' occur also in Pelliot Tibétain 699, a manuscript allegedly written in the tenth century CE, where they are functional to a discussion in which Chan and tantric elements are melted together; see van Schaik, Dalton (2004, p. 67).



1. First, the practitioner should pay attention to moral behaviour and, particularly, s/he should control her/his speech, which must become the truthful expression of the recollections of what s/he has seen/known (34a2). According to the *Śatasahāsrīkaprajñāpāramitā*, in the first *bhūmi* one has to practice the *satyavacana*, the true speech, and the *parikarmmavacana*, which in this case indicates the speech in accordance with one's actions (Ghoṣa 1911, p. 1455); also the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* upholds that this practice is related to the first *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 9): *yathāvāditathākāritayā satatasamitaṃ satyavacanānurakṣaṇatayā* (By behaving as he speaks and by guarding the true speech constantly and continually), but adds that it is in the second *bhūmi* that the would-be *bodhisattva* becomes (Vaidya 1967, p. 15): *satyavādī bhūtavādī kālavādī yathāvādī tathākārī* | (A speaker of the truth, speaker of facts, speaker in [the right] time, one who speaks as he behaves). In general, underscores the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, it is in the second *bhūmi* that the practitioner cultivates a good moral attitude.
2. Then, s/he should train her-/himself in the practice of meditation, and this can be done by following different methods, such as the meditation pointing at the equality of all the *dharma*s or the meditation developing mental satisfaction (34a3-4).
3. In consequence of, and in support to, these methods of meditation, s/he is able to calm both mind and body by way of a controlled breath (34a4), approaching consequently the state in which her/his mind is devoid of attachment to objects or concepts (34a5).
4. Such a condition is strictly related to the elimination of all the obstructions that prevent the practitioner to proceed further in the meditative path (34b1). In the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* the mental withdrawal from objectivation and conceptualization of the conditioned things of ordinary experience is said to begin in the third *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 18): [...] *bhūyasyā mātrayā sarvasaṃskārebhyaś cittam uccālayati* [...] | *sa evaṃ nirvidanugataś ca sarvasaṃskāragatyā* [...] further on, he moves [his] mind away from all the conditioning factors [...]. He thus acquires disgust towards the course of all the conditioning factors), though it is fully attained in the sixth, as we will see in a while. The third *bhūmi* is also where the cessation of the obstructions takes place, by way of the practice of meditation (Vaidya 1967, p. 21): *cittena* [...] °*anāvarena*°. We find the *Śatasahāsrīkaprajñāpāramitā* differing on this point and stating that both the elimination of the attachment towards the objects/concepts of ordinary life and the cessation of the obstructions are typical outcomes only of the sixth *bhūmi* (Ghoṣa 1911, p. 1456): *sarvvavastuni parityajya durmanaskatā parivarjayitavyāḥ* | (Having abandoned every object, the bad mental dispositions are to be avoided).

5. It is in this moment that s/he realizes a non-linguistic contemplation, which is also non-conceptual, and here, by means of a – so to say – self-contradictory process leading to the observation of concepts without conceptualizing them, the nature of the *dharmas*, that is, the *dharmatā* begins to disclose itself directly to the practitioner's eyes (34b2-4). This kind of apparently self-contradictory approach could hint at some Chinese Chan meditational practice, as pointed out above.
6. In so doing, s/he attains the so-called non-forgetfulness of mindfulness (*smṛtyasaṃpramoṣatā*), namely, a state in which s/he is ever-mindful, in both the senses of never forgetting and not losing focus in meditation (34b4). The *Daśabhūmikasūtra* explains that such a state is developed in the fifth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 28): *sa bhūyasyā mātrayā asyāṃ pañcamyāṃ sudurjayāyāṃ bodhisattvabhūmau sthito bodhisattvaḥ smṛtimāṃś ca bhavati asaṃpramoṣadharmatayā* (The *bodhisattva*, who remains still more in this fifth stage of the *bodhisattva* [path, called] 'difficult to be conquered', becomes mindful by means of [being] non-forgetful).
7. The non-forgetfulness of mindfulness is said to take place after having relaxed the body, becalmed the senses and kept the mind attentive: all this leads to the elimination of whatever conditioning factor (34b5-35a1) that can distract from being concentrated in the meditational practice. This account reminds us of the so-called *bodhipakṣya dharmas*, namely, the practices helpful to enlightenment. In particular, the reference here to body, senses, mind and conditioned/conditioning elements seems to point, among the *bodhipakṣya dharmas*, to the four *smṛtyupasthānas*, 'applications of mindfulness' (*kāya-*, *vedanā-*, *citta-* and *dharmasmṛtyupasthāna*). According to the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, the *smṛtyupasthānas* should be cultivated in the fourth *bhūmi*, since they are a prerequisite to the arising, in the fifth *bhūmi*, of the 'non-forgetfulness of mindfulness' (Vaidya 1967, p. 80, verse 10): *so eṣu dharmu samupetu hitānukampī bhāveti kāyam api vedanacittadharmān | adhyātmabhāyubhayathā vidu bhāvayāti smṛtyopasthānabhāvāna nīketavarjitā ||* (He, provided with these qualities, [being] beneficial and compassionate, cultivates also [the meditation on] the body, sensations, mind and *dharmas*; the wise one [that performs] the meditation on the applications of mindfulness considers both the internal and external [events] as without distinctive marks [namely, equal]). Moreover, if on the one hand the *Śatasahāsrīkaprajñāpāramitā* tells us that the elimination of the idea of cause and/or condition takes place in the seventh *bhūmi* (Ghoṣa 1911, p. 1457): *nimittasaṃjñā na kartavya |* (The recognition of cause is not to be accomplished), according to the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, on the other hand, the detachment from what-

- ever is a conditioned thing and a conditioning factor occurs instead in the sixth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 34): *na ca saṃskṛtasamvāsena samvasati | svabhāvopasāmaṃ ca saṃskārāṇāṃ pratyavekṣate |* (And [the *bodhisattva*'s mind] is not associated with what is in connection with conditioned [entities; rather, s/he] examines the interruption of [the idea of] the own-nature of the conditioning factors).
8. The practitioner develops in this way the skillfulness in means of/ and wisdom that should gradually become permanent during all the possible situations (*īryāpatha*) of her/his life (35a1-2). The ability to know both the right means for attaining the final emancipation and wisdom is, in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, said to be a characteristic related to the sixth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 34): *samprayuktaś ca bhavaty upāyaprajñāvicāraiḥ |* (And he is intent in thoughtful examinations on [skillfulness in] means and wisdom). This is due, as said above, to the practice of the *bodhipakṣya dharmas* that, when well consolidated, leads the would-be *bodhisattva* to the seventh *bhūmi*, which in its turn presents, among its special features, the capacity to experience continually the results of the *bodhipakṣya dharmas* throughout every moment of the practitioner's life (Vaidya 1967, p. 37): *tiṣṭhann api niṣaṅṅo'pi śayāno'pi svapnāntaragato'py apagatanīvaraṇaḥ sarveryāpathe sthito [...] bodhisattvasya sarvabodhyaṅgāni kṣaṇe kṣaṇe paripūryante tadatirekeṇa punar asyām eva saptamyām bodhisattvabhūmau |* (Having [every] hindrance gone while standing, sitting, lying down and also in the middle of a dream, [thus] he abides in all the deportments [...], all the practices helpful to enlightenment are completely fulfilled in every moment [of the meditational path], however only in this seventh *bodhisattva* stage [he experiences] abundantly that).
  9. This is made possible by previously and primarily diminishing the sense-based 'reifying' activity, which allows the practitioner's mind to observe things as they really are, that is, 'equal' or empty of intrinsic nature (35a2-3). In the *Śatasahāsrīkaprajñāpāramitā* such results are said to be experienced in the seventh *bhūmi* (Ghoṣa 1911, p. 1457): *sarvadharmasamatādarśanaṃ |* (The vision of the equality of all the *dharmas*); according to the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* the awareness of the 'equality' of everything is instead attained in the sixth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 31): *sa daśabhir dharmasamatābhīr avatarati |* (He arrives at [this stage] by virtue of the ten equalities of the *dharmas* [the text proceeds with the explanation of which ten]).
  10. To reach such an awareness, the practitioner's mind should first become 'only-reflecting' as a mirror, namely, without any interference of conceptual constructions over the 'simple' observation of the *dharma*tā of the *dharmas*; s/he achieves such a condition by virtue of the so-called antidotes (*pratīpakṣa*) to the deficiencies of meditation,

so that s/he can cultivate the root of mindfulness and attain wisdom (35a3-5), which is a self-knowing knowledge that originates spontaneously (35b3). The splendor of wisdom, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* tells us, manifests itself in the sixth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 34): [a]saṅgajñānābhimukho nāma prajñāpāramitāvihāro'bhimukhī bhavaty avabhāsayogena | sa evaṃ jñānasamanvāgataḥ prajñāpāramitāvihārāvabhāsito [...] supraṭiṣṭhitaś ca bhavati bodhisattvajñānālokatāyām | (The *prajñāpāramitā* abode called 'facing the unobstructed knowledge' is [the sixth stage, named] 'facing', since it is connected with bright. Thus, he, provided with knowledge, is bright [since he dwells] in the abode of the *prajñāpāramitā* [...]. And he is well established in the condition of resplendent *bodhisattva*'s knowledge), but the complete attainment of the *dharmatā*, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* specifies, is fully experienced only in the eighth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 43): eṣā sarvadharmāṇāṃ dharmatā | (This [*bhūmi*] is the *dharmatā* of all *dharmas*).

11. In conclusion, the meditative path should lead the would-be *bodhisattva* to uproot greed, conceptual constructions and mental distractions in order to attain internal peace and wisdom (35b3-36a1).

To sum up, the comparison just drawn helps us to notice how the *Explanation* describes a meditational path that can be roughly equated to the practices and attainments of the *bhūmis* 1-8 of the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, a text whose contents seem therefore to have significantly inspired Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ's approach.

### 3.2 English Annotated Translation

While I was analysing the text, it was my primary concern to try to find out the possible Mahāyāna sources that could have inspired Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ, such as passages from writings belonging to the *prajñāpāramitā* literature, the *Laṅkāvataraśūtra* and so on, which I have referred to in the notes.

The usual Sanskrit equivalents of Tibetan key terms have been inserted into brackets. Tibetan words corresponding to expressions of common use in Buddhist writings have been rendered into Sanskrit: *dharmas*, *dharmatā*, *bodhisattva*, *yoga*, *vipaśyana*, *śamatha*, *sūtra*/s.

## Translation

Explanation by the *ācārya* Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ

What is the *bodhisattva*'s true speech (*satyavacana*)? It is as follows:

He [*scil.* the *bodhisattva*] is one who speaks as he behaves and behaves as he speaks (*yathāvādī tathākārī yathākārī tathāvādī*).<sup>46</sup> Also, having being mindful he speaks, and having spoken he is mindful.

Because of [his] senses still more vigilant (*apramatta*), he is equanimous: for example, [he follows] the method of equal[ity]<sup>47</sup>

**46** The exhortation to speak in conformity with what one does and to behave in conformity with what one says occurs several times in the Pāli Canon, where we are told that this is one of the characteristics of the *tathāgata*'s conduct. This is clearly stated in the following recurring sentence (*Aṅguttaranikāya* 2.24, *Dīghanikāya* 3.135, *Itivuttaka* p. 122, etc.): *yathāvādī bhikkhave tathāgato tathākārī yathākārī tathāvādī | iti yathāvādī tathākārī yathākārī tathāvādī | tasmā tathāgato ti vuccati*. See also *Dīghanikāya* 3.224, 229. In the *prajñāpāramitā* literature the same idea is stressed, but in this case it represents the good conduct the *bodhisattva* should embrace as far as the truthful speech is concerned. In the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* we can indeed read (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.2, p. 92): *tatra katamad bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya satyavacanaparikarma yad uta yathāvādītathākāritā idaṃ bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya satyavacanaparikarma* (There, what is the *bodhisattva mahāsattva*'s purification of the true speech? It is the state of speaking as he behaves. This is the *bodhisattva mahāsattva*'s purification of the true speech). Consider also the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Vaidya 1960, p. 222): *aparābhyāṃ subhūte dvābhyāṃ dharmābhyāṃ samanvāgato bodhisattvo mahāsattvo durgharṣo bhavati māraih pāpīyobhir mārakāyikābhir vā devatābhiḥ | katamābhyāṃ dvābhyāṃ yad uta yathāvādī tathākārī ca bhavati buddhais ca bhagavadbhiḥ samanvāhriyate |*; translation in Conze (1958, pp. 183-184).

**47** The concept of 'equality' (Tibetan *mñam ñid*, Sanskrit *amatā*) and the related practice of equanimity, as is well-known, play a fundamental role in the *prajñāpāramitā* context, where 'equality' consists in the realization that there is no difference between things, since they share one and the same nature, that is, voidness (Tibetan *ston pa ñid*, Sanskrit *sūnyatā*), lack of real substance. In the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, for instance, we are told that equality arises in a particular meditative state (Kimura 1986-2009, vol. 1.2, p. 70): *tatra katamaḥ sarvadharmasamatā nāma samādhiḥ | yatra samādhou sthitvā na kañcid dharmam samatānirmuktaṃ samanupaśyati tenocyate sarvadharmasamatā nāma samādhiḥ |* (There, what is the *samādhi* called equality of all the *dharma*s? Where, having he abided in the *samādhi*, he does not observe any *dharma* as deprived of equality, by this it is said *samādhi* called equality of all the *dharma*s). In such a state, the meditator attains the insight that everything does neither change nor remain unchanged (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.2, p. 50): *iha subhūte bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ sarvadharmāṇāṃ amatāyāṃ sthitvā na kasyacid dharmasya vikṣepaṃ vā avikṣepaṃ vā samanupaśyati | evaṃ hi subhūte bodhisattvo mahāsattvo dhyānapāramitāyāṃ sthito bhavati* (Here, O Subhūti, the *bodhisattva mahāsattva*, having abided in [the state of] equality of all the *dharma*s, does not observe either scattering or non-scattering of whatever *dharma*. Thus indeed, O Subhūti, a *bodhisattva mahāsattva* is abiding in the perfection of meditation). This is a condition of abstraction from whatever reification, a condition in which the meditator understands that every distinction is only apparent, and consequently nothing is grasped as something real, as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* explains well (Vaidya 1960, p. 102): *asamasamatāpāramiteyaṃ bhagavan sarvadharmānupalabdhitāṃ upādāya*; translation in Conze (1958, p. 71). If there is

or of satisfaction<sup>48</sup> and also diminishes [the rhythm of] the breath and

nothing actually real, if everything is non-existent in itself, it follows that everything whatsoever is void of intrinsic nature. We find the Buddha explaining this very concept in, for instance, the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Conze 1962-1974, 2, p. 39): *adyātmasūnyatā subhūte bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām samatā bahirdhāsūnyatā subhūte bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām samatā adhyātmabahirdhāsūnyatā subhūte bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām samatā* (O Subhūti, the equality of the *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* is internal voidness, O Subhūti, the equality of the *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* is external voidness, O Subhūti, the equality of the *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* is internal and external voidness [only] when, O Subhūti, the equality of the *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* is voidness of intrinsic nature of the non-existent). Moreover, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* underlines how the comprehension of the equality of everything derives from the state of equanimity and should spur the *bodhisattva* to lead the other sentient beings to realize that very same equality (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.1, p. 103): *sarvasattvānām antike samacittatām utpādyā sarvadharmasamatām pratilabhate | sarvadharmasamatām pratilabhya sarvasattvān sarvadharmasamatāyām pratiṣṭhāpayati* (Having produced equanimity in the presence of all the sentient beings, he obtains the equality of all the *dharmas*. Having obtained the equality of all the *dharmas*, he introduces all the sentient beings into the equality of all the *dharmas*). It is to be remarked, moreover, that also in the *Lañkāvatārasūtra* we find the idea of 'equality' applied to the practice of *yoga* as, for instance, the following two verses witness. *Lañkāvatārasūtra* 3.28 (Vaidya 1963, p. 62): *caturvidhā vai samatā lakṣaṇam hetubhāvajam | nairātmyasamatā caiva caturtham yogayoginām ||* (The equality of the *yogins* that practice *yoga* is indeed fourfold: [the equality concerning] characteristics, causes, coming into existence and also the equality concerning non-self as fourth); 3.56a-d (Vaidya 1963, p. 69): *nirābhāso hi bhāvānām abhāve nāsti yoginām | bhāvābhāvasamatvena āryānām jāyate phalam |* (In the *yogins*' [mental state of] absence of existence, surely there is not [even the comprehension] without fallacious appearance of the events; by means of the equality of events and non-events, the fruit [*scil.* awareness] of the nobles is born). Under the influence of these sources, the concept of 'equality' became one of the central topics also of the Chinese Chan tradition.

48 The Tibetan term *gza' ba* presents some difficulty, since its etymology is still not fully clear. In the present context, I suggest to assume it with the meaning of 'rejoicing', 'gratification', 'satisfaction' and the like. In the Tibetan Canon it occurs very rarely, at least as far as I can say: I was able, indeed, to find only four occurrences of *gza' ba*, all contained in one single text belonging to the bKa'-gyur, the *Saṅs rgyas kyi mdzod kyi chos kyi yi ge* (\**Buddhadharmakośakāra*), corresponding to Lhasa bKa'-gyur, mDo-sde, Ña, 226b5-321b6. The contexts in which we meet with *gza' ba* can be summarized as follows: 1. (232a2-3) The *dharma*, characterized as right truth (*yañ dag pa'i bden pa'i mtshan ma'i chos*), has, among other qualities, also the characteristics of being ultimately joyless (*dga' ba'añ med*) and without satisfaction (*gza' ba'añ med*). 2. (272b2-3) Having well sized the words of the *dharma* (*chos kyi yi ge gzuñ su bzuñ ste*), when one desires to read and recite them (*klog ciñ kha ton la sred pa*) and to hear their explanations (*bśad pa thos na*), s/he develops a happy and satisfied mind even if (*sems dga' gza' ba de lta bu'añ*) s/he does not look happy (*mthoñ du mi dga'o*). 3. (275a4-5) When somebody hears the *dharma* of non-existence - according to which whatever there is, is empty of intrinsic nature - contained in the excellent writings dealing with the words of the *dharma* (*la la žig gis 'di lta bu chos kyi yi ge'i mchog gi gzuñ stoñ pa ci'añ med pa'i chos thos na*), if he has a happy and satisfied mind (*sems dga' gza' ba žig yod*), a man like this, it is evident that he is an authentic disciple of the Buddha (*de lta bu'i mi ni | yañ dag pa'i ña'i slob ma yin par mion*). 4. (361b5-6) One who relies upon, and prays, a *bhikṣu* who has broken his vows (*tshul khriims žig pa'i dge sloñ gis yid ches śiñ kha ton*) and, having read the *dharma*, teaches to others even though he is not capable (*bklags la mi la bstan pa'añ mi nus na*), in that case what need is there to openly speak of his obvi-

is [mentally] vigilant.

Having performed what is without [any] frame of mind, [in him] there is absence of whatever support for attention.<sup>49</sup>

ous incapability of having a happy and satisfied mind (*de la sems dga' gza' ba mi nus pa lta smos kyañ ci dgos*)?

For the sake of completeness it is noteworthy that in this text we find also occurrences of *gza'* alone (namely, without the appended nominalizing particle *ba*) and in every occasion but one the term is related to *dga'* or *kun dga'* ('joy', 'happiness', etc.): (262b5) *sems śin tu dga' zñ gza'*; (294a3-4) *sems la śin tu dga' zñ gza'*; (298b2) *dge sloñ phal mañ po rnam kun dga' gza'*; (302b5) *sems dga' gza'*; (321b5) *kun śin tu dga' gza'*. The remaining occurrence of *gza'* is in a *pāda* of a section in verses, where reference is made to the importance of being free from the sovereignty of the great illusionary satisfaction (*gza' ru 'phrul chen rje dañ bral*) due to maintaining and professing the theory of self as self (*bdag bdag brjod ciñ bśad pa*). What precedes allows us to point out that the term *gza' ba* is somehow related to a serene state of mind that follows the hearing, studying, teaching and reflecting upon the *dharma*, which consists in the doctrine of non-self, that is, of emptiness. Although it cannot be said with certainty whether or not this is the sense according to which *gza ba* is used in the *Explanation*, nonetheless it seems beyond doubt that the expression *gza' ba'i thabs* suggests some practical exercise or training of a meditative nature. As is well known, indeed, it is since the time of the Pāli Canon that the experience of psycho-physical satisfaction (Pāli *assāda*, Sanskrit *āsvāda*) has played a relevant place in Buddhist meditation. See for instance the long description of the satisfaction of feelings (*vedanānaṃ assādaṃ*) in *Majjhimanikāya* 13, *Mahādukkhakkhandhasutta* (§ 173; MN 1.89-90). This and other similar Canonical excerpts may have represented the scriptural background of those passages in the *prajñāpāramitā* texts, in which the concept of 'satisfaction' is likewise involved in the mastery of meditation. In the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* we can for instance read (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.2, p. 170): *sa maitrīkaruṇāmuditopekṣāṃ bhāvayati dhyānasamāpattiḥ samāpadyate vyuttiṣṭhate ca tā āsvādayati* | (He [*scil.* the *bodhisattva*] produces benevolence, compassion, joy and equanimity, he enters and leaves the meditations through cultivation and is satisfied with them).

49 This sentence opens a section devoted to some important concepts concerning the practice of meditation. In particular, the idea is stressed here that meditation should be performed by abandoning whatever support for attention. A similar approach can be detected in some *prajñāpāramitā* texts, such as, for instance, the *Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā*, where we can indeed read (Vaidya 1961, p. 78): [...] *bodhisattvena mahāsattvena evam apratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam yan na kvacit pratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam | na rūpapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam na śabdagandharasaspraṣṭavyadharmapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam* | [...] by the *bodhisattva mahāsattva* a non-rooted mind should be thus produced; he should never produce a rooted mind; he should neither produce a mind rooted in forms, nor should he produce a mind rooted in sounds, smells, tastes, tangible [things] and *dharmas*). And a few lines later, we meet with the following similar passage (Vaidya 1961, p. 81): [...] *bodhisattvena mahāsattvena sarvasaṃjñā vivarjayitvā anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādayitavyam | na rūpapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam na śabdagandharasaspraṣṭavyadharmapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam na dharmapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam nādharmapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam na kvacit pratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam | tat kasya hetoḥ yat pratiṣṭhitam tad evāpratiṣṭhitam* | [...] by the *bodhisattva mahāsattva*, having [he] shunned all the conceptions, a mind should be produced [rooted] in the uttermost complete awakening; he should neither produce a mind rooted in forms, nor should he produce a mind rooted in sounds, smells, tastes and tangible [things], nor should he produce a mind rooted in *dharmas*, nor should he ever produce a rooted mind. What is the reason of that? [The reason is that] what is rooted, that is indeed non-rooted). The method described here, we can observe, involves the abstention from relying upon the

Accordingly, he stares by himself totally<sup>50</sup> at what is without a support for attention.

He should stare without staring:<sup>51</sup> in that moment, also the splendor

sense-objects (*rūpa*, *śabda*, etc.), from objectifying them, as well as from every mental result of the perceptual activity (*saṃjñā*).

50 I interpret the Tibetan expression *śIn du bdag gis* as equivalent to the Sanskrit *atīva/atyantam ātmanā* and the like. There is, however, the possibility that here *śIn du bdag* conveys the meaning of *atyantātman* ('the entire self') and similar terms, or even of *paramātman* ('the supreme self') since occasionally, though very rarely, *śin tu* translates the Sanskrit preverbal particle *param/parama*; see Negi (2004), *s.v. śin tu sīñ por gyur pa < paramaḥṛdayaprāpta, śin tu phra ba'i rdul < paramāṅuraja, śin tu mi dga' ba < paramasandīpta/paramasaṃvigna, śin tu mya ñan < paramaśoka*, etc. The entire sentence would consequently sound as follows: 'Accordingly, he stares with the entire/supreme self at what is without a support for attention'. This may suggest some non-Buddhist concept pointing at the existence of the self, but it is not the case. On the contrary, in those Mahāyāna scriptures, in which for instance the term *paramātman* occurs, it is made clear that the 'supreme self', rather, indicates the higher state of consciousness, where the mind is purified from the conceptions of both self and non-self, where there is freedom from conceptual constructions and where the *dharmatā* shines forth. Even though it occurs only twice there, the term *paramātman* seems to have played an important doctrinal role in one of the foundational writings of the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition, namely, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. As is well known, the root verses of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* are attributed to Maitreyanātha (third-fourth centuries CE) according to the Tibetan tradition, whereas the part in prose is to be ascribed to a certain Sāramati (fifth century CE). See Takasaki (1966, pp. 61-62). However, according to Chinese tradition, both the verses and the prose are attributed to Sāramati. In the Sanskrit version of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* that has reached us, the first occurrence of *paramātman* we meet with is in the following sentence in prose (Prasad 1991, p. 31): [...] *prajñāpāramitābhāvanāyāḥ paramātmapāramitādhiḡamaḥ phalaṃ draṣṭavyam* | [...] the attainment of the perfection of the supreme self should be considered as the fruit [derived] from the cultivation of the *prajñāpāramitā*; whereas the second occurrence is in verse 37 and runs thus (Prasad 1991, p. 34): *sa hi prakṛtisuddhatvād vāsanāpagamāc chuciḥ | paramātmānairātmyaprapañcakṣayaśāntitaḥ* || (Indeed, it [scil. the *dharmakāya*] is radiant because of [its] natural purity and of the removal of latent tendencies; it is the supreme self, appeased [because of] the removal of the conceptual proliferations of self and non-self). See also Takasaki (1966, pp. 211-212, note 96), who refers to similar passages in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga (fourth century CE). Interestingly enough, the sentence in the *Explanation* that immediately follows the present one seems to expose a perspective quite similar to that expressed in *Ratnagotravibhāga* 37. Besides all this, while discussing with me the possibility of interpreting *śIn du bdag* as *paramātman*, Kirill Solonin was kind enough to draw my attention towards the concept of 'true I' (Chinese *zhenwo* 真我), which is one of the fundamental notions of the Huayan 華嚴 school of Chinese Buddhism, whose teachings were inspired to the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*. Since this school was particularly active during the eighth-tenth centuries CE and since the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra* seems to be one of the scriptural sources directly known to Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ (indeed, with all probability an excerpt from this *sūtra* is quoted in the *Explanation*), Solonin suggests that the Huayan idea of 'true I' could represent one of the notions that lie behind the expression *śIn du bdag*, if this is to be intended as conveying the meaning of *paramātman*. In this case we would accordingly have here another possible evidence of the influence of Chinese Buddhism on Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ's approach to meditation.

51 The idea of 'seeing without seeing' is a *locus communis* in many meditational Buddhist traditions. Interestingly enough, this idea must be quite ancient, since we find it in



of the mind shines forth.<sup>52</sup> By means of a pure and radiant mind, he also gets rid of the obstructions (*āvaraṇa*).<sup>53</sup>

If you ask: what is [the state of] a *bodhisattva*? [The answer is:] the inexpressibility of all the *dharmas*.<sup>54</sup>

nuce also in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*, where it is related to the realization of the equality and voidness of all *dharmas*, which in its turn corresponds to the attainment of the *dharmakāya*. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*, indeed, explains (Vaidya 1960, p. 93): *so'vabudhya traidhātukaṃ daśasu dikṣu śūnyam [...] | ya evaṃ gambhīrān dharmān paśyati sa paśyati apaśyanāyā [...] (He, having realized [the final wisdom, sees] the triple world as void in the ten directions [...]. The one who thus sees the profound dharmas, that one sees by non-seeing [...]. In another passage, namely Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra 5.81-82ab, we are also told that (Vaidya 1960, p. 96): sarvadharmān samān śūnyān nirnānākaraṇātmakān | na caitān prekṣate nāpi kiṃcid dharmāṃ vipaśyati || sa paśyati mahāprajñō dharmakāyam aśeṣataḥ | ([The one who] neither observes all these dharmas, [which are] equal, void, without diversity and individuality, nor even perceives any dharma whatsoever, he, [who] has the great wisdom, sees completely the dharmakāya).*

52 The Tibetan expression *sems kyi 'od* corresponds to the Sanskrit compound *prabhāsvaracitta*, the 'translucent mind' (*'od gsal sems* or *sems kyi 'od gsal* in its extended Tibetan form), a concept quite common in Buddhism since the Pāli Canon (*pabhassaracitta*). It identifies the state of mind, in which all the impurities have been eliminated. For a general survey of the Pāli treatment of *pabhassaracitta*, see Tan (2005). In the context of the *Explanation*, however, Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ may have intended the term according to a Mahāyāna perspective – perhaps with some Yagācāra nuance – that generally refers the 'translucent mind' to the emergence of the *tathāgatagarbha*, the grasping of the *dharmatā*, and so on. On the Yogācāra interpretation of *prabhāsvaracitta* see, among others, the recent Berger (2015, pp. 105-114). Moreover, for a comparative study of Indian and Tibetan approaches, see Skorupski (unpublished).

53 The 'obstructions' (Sanskrit *āvaraṇa*) are factors that impede the meditative equipoise. They are generally grouped in two main categories: *kleśāvaraṇa* ('obstructions of the afflictions') and *jñeyāvaraṇa* ('obstructions of the knowable [object]'). Some texts speak also of other obstructions such as *samāpattiyāvaraṇa* ('obstructions of the mental absorption'), *vipākāvaraṇa* ('obstructions of karmic ripening'), *sarāgāvaraṇa* ('obstructions of attachment'), and so forth. The Tibetan term for 'obstruction', namely, *sgrib pa*, can convey also the meaning of the Sanskrit *nīvaraṇa*, 'hindrances', as it happens for instance in the *Teaching on the mistakes of meditation* (text 2 of IOL Tib J 709), where as a matter of fact *sgrib pa* is used to refer to the well-known five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) to meditation, which are listed as follows (IOL Tib J 709, 11b2-4): *dgod pa dañ 'gyod pa nI ži gnas kyl sgrib pa yIn no | | rmugs pa dañ gñI dāñ the tshom nI lhag mthoñ gi sgrib pa yIn no | | 'dod pa la 'dun pa dañ gnod sems nI | | gñI ga'I sgrib pa yIn no | | (Laugh and regret are the hindrances of śamatha. Laziness, indolence and doubt are the hindrances of vipaśyana. Sense desire and ill-will are the hindrances of both). The same account occurs also in text 6 of the manuscript, at IOL Tib J 709, 38a2-3.*

54 The inexpressibility (Tibetan *mi brjod pa [ñid]*, Sanskrit *anabhilāpya[tā]/nirabhilāpya[tā]*) of all the *dharmas* is a key concept occurring throughout the *prajñāpāramitā* literature. It is recurrent in the descriptions of the comprehension of the intrinsic voidness of things that consists with the elimination of all the false imaginations and the consequent attainment of the *dharmatā*, which is in itself ineffable. By way of example, let us consider the following few passages. One from the *Aṣṭasahasrikaprajñāpāramitā* (Vaidya 1960, p. 173): *sarvadharmā api subhūte anabhilāpyāḥ | tatkasya hetoḥ yā ca subhūte sarvadharmāṇām śūnyatā na sā śakyā abhilāpitum | (O Subhūti, all the dharmas are surely inexpressible. Why is this [so]? O Subhūti, that voidness of all the dharmas cannot be expressed). Compare with Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikaprajñāpāramitā (Kimura 1986-2009, 4, p. 173). Another from the Pa-*

If you ask: what is the inexpressibility? [It is] the mindfulness of the *dharmatā* of the *dharmas*. The mindfulness of the *dharmatā* of the *dharmas* is to be mindful without being mindful or to conceive without conceiving.<sup>55</sup>

Inexpressible means without conceiving, and it is the non-forgetfulness of mindfulness.<sup>56</sup>

*ñcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Kimura 1986-2009, 2-3, p. 97): *yat sarvadharmānām prakṛtisūnyatātvam anupalambho yāvad yā sarvadharmānām nirabhilāpyatā apravyāhārātā iyam ucyate asaṃskṛtadharmatā* | (Until [there is] that state of natural voidness and non-apprehension of all the *dharmas*, [there is] that inexpressibility and unspeakability of all the *dharmas*; this [state] is called uncompounded *dharmatā*), and (Kimura 1986-2009, 6-8, p. 168): *na cāgrāhyānām dharmānām agrāhyatā śaktābhilāpituṃ* (The ungraspability of the ungraspable *dharmas* cannot be expressed). Besides, we meet with this very concept also in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (Vaidya 1963, p. 32): *sarvadharmānirabhilāpyasūnyatā punar mahāmate katamā | yad uta parikalpitasvabhāvānirabhilāpyatvān nirabhilāpyasūnyāḥ sarvadharmāḥ |* (Again, O Mahāmati, what is the voidness of the inexpressibility of all the *dharmas*? It is like this: out of the inexpressibility of the imagined nature [of the *dharmas*, it follows that] all the *dharmas* are inexpressible and void). Interestingly enough, in text 4 of IOL Tib J 709 one of the topics discussed is the inexpressibility of the *tathāgatagarbha*.

55 The idea that the meditation should or should not proceed by means of a non-mentation (Sanskrit *amanasikāra*) and non-recollection (Sanskrit *asmṛti*) method, represents a well-known matter of dispute between the two main Buddhist traditions of meditation, namely, the so-called 'immediate' and the 'gradual' approaches. According to the traditional accounts, these two perspectives in Tibet were represented respectively by the Chinese Heshang Moheyang – propounder of the 'immediate' approach – and the Indian Kamalaśīla – propounder of the 'gradual' approach –, during the formal debate, instituted by king KHrisron-lde-brtsan, that reportedly took place at the bSam-yas monastery in the eighth century CE. For a clear outlook of the discussion concerning *amanasikāra* see Higgins (2006, pp. 255-262). It is worth noting, here, that in the *prajñāpāramitā* literature we meet with passages that convey the idea that the highest understanding should be attained by non-apprehension, which eventually means that the highest knowledge is a sort of non-knowledge. See for instance the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.1, p. 35): *sarvadharmaprajñānānupalambhayogena prajñāpāramitā paripūrītā bhavati* (The *prajñāpāramitā* is accomplished through non-apprehension [by the one who] discerns all the *dharmas*), and (Kimura, vols. 2-3, p. 147): [...] *sarvākārajñānānupalabdhyā prajñāpāramitā pratyarpitā bhavati* | ([...] the *prajñāpāramitā* is fixed by means of the non-apprehension of the knowledge of all the appearances). A similar concept, pointing at attaining a certain meditative condition by avoiding that very condition, is meant by the expression *susthito'sthānayogena* (standing firmly, in consequence of not taking his stand anywhere), which occurs for instance in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-* and *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*.

56 The 'non-forgetfulness of mindfulness' (Sanskrit *smṛtyasaṃpramoṣatā*) is a central concept in Buddhist meditation. In the Mahāyāna context, it occurs for instance in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, attributed to Asaṅga. In the final chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Asaṅga gives a particular interpretation of it, as follows (Dutt 1996, p. 279): *tatra tathāgatasyānuṣṭeyaṃ yac ca bhavati <yatra ca bhavati> yathā ca bhavati yadā ca bhavati tatra tasya tathā tadā samyaganuṣṭhānād iyaṃ tathāgatasyāsammoṣadharmatety ucyate | iti yā ca tatra tathāgatasya sarvakṛtyeṣu sarvadeśeṣu sarvakṛtyopāyeṣu sarvakāleṣu smṛtyasaṃpramoṣatā sadopasthitasmṛtitā | iyam atrāsamoṣadharmatā draṣṭavyā* | (There, what is to be [kept mentally] present of the *tathāgata* is who [he is], <in which occasion,> in which manner, at what time [did he do this or that thing]; this is said the non-forgetful *dharmatā* of the *tathāgata*, [which is obtained] out of the proper [mental] presence [concerning] that [particular] occasion, his [actions], that manner, that time. And there, that

Non-forgetfulness of mindfulness, that is: [after having] extensively relaxed the body and smoothed the senses by means of a mindful mind, he [*scil.* the *bodhisattva*] should also greatly diminish the [rhythm of] breath, [insofar as any] occasion for [whatever] conditioning factor is no [more] ascertained. He [then] practices with equanimity the fourfold deportment (*īryāpatha*):<sup>57</sup> that is the skillfulness in means (*upayakauśalyatā*) of wisdom (*prajñā*).<sup>58</sup>

To smooth the six senses is the method of equality. After having cleansed well the mirror [of the mind],<sup>59</sup> placed at the crossing of the

non-forgetfulness of mindfulness, [that] state of abiding always in the mindfulness of all the actions, all the places, all the means for the actions, all the times of the *tathāgata*, this, then, is to be regarded as the non-forgetful *dharmatā*). To compare with *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Kimura 1986-2009, 6-8, p. 61): *sarvakṛtyeṣu sarvadeśeṣu sarvopāyeṣu sarvakāleṣu sadopasthitasmṛtitā iyam ucyate asaṃmoṣadharmatā* |. Furthermore, in the present passage the *Explanation* seems to expound a doctrine strongly indebted to Kim Heshang's 'three phrases'. It is worth of note, on this regard, that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ mentions [*dran ba*] *myī brjed pa*, namely, 'non-forgetfulness [of mindfulness]', which conceptually corresponds to Kim Heshang's third sentence: 'not forgetting' (Chinese *mowang* 莫忘). As is well-known, there is on this particular phrase a disagreement in the Chinese tradition, since also the homophonic variant *mowang* 莫妄, meaning 'do not be deluded', is attested. However, it seems that this latter variant is to be attributed to Wuzhu 无住, disciple of Kim Heshang. On this particular matter, see Adamek (2007, pp. 206, 295). Contrary to what happens in the *Explanation*, we find other Dunhuang Tibetan sources dealing or mentioning the 'three phrases' according to Wuzhu's interpretation. For instance, in Pelliot Tibétain 699 the 'three phrases' are rendered into Tibetan as follows: *mi sems* (no-mind), *mi dran* (no-mindfulness) and *sgyu ma* (illusion), which stands for *sgyu ma'i sems mi 'byuñ ba* ('non-emerging of illusory mind'). See van Schaik, Dalton (2004, pp. 67, 71, note 29). Another text related to Wuzhu is contained in Pelliot Tibétain 121, on which see van Schaik (2015, p. 101).

57 The so-called 'four deportments' are the four positions of the body, namely, standing upright, walking, sitting and lying down. Such deportments are the subject of a particular practice of mindfulness, consisting in being always aware of the position of one's own body. Let us by way of example quote the following passage taken from the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, in which - as it happens in the *Explanation* - mental attention, breath control and the four deportments are related to each other (Kimura 1986-2009, 4, p. 155): *sa khalu punaḥ subhūte'vinivartaniyo bodhisattvo mahāsattva ane imena ca manasikāreṇa samanvāgataś caturbhiś ceryāpathair abhikrāmati na pratikrāmati na bhrāntacitto āgacchati na bhrāntacitta gacchati [...]* (Again, indeed, O Subhūti, this *bodhisattva mahāsattva* that will never regress, provided with [mental] attention in [his] breath, advances by, and does not abstain [himself] from, [performing] the four deportments, he comes without a confused mind, he goes without a confused mind [...]).

58 Wisdom and skillful means are mutually related, to the point that for instance the text 7 of IOL Tib J 709 states that they are non-dual (*gñis su myed pa*) and inseparable or undifferentiated (*dbyer myed pa*).

59 The mirror as a symbol of the mind, which should be cleansed from all mental impurities, is a typical image of the Yogācāra school (and of its tantric derivations as well), whereas it does not occur in the Madhyamaka literature, where the simile of the mirror conveys other meanings. To Alex Wayman we owe two thorough studies (1971, 1974) on this subject, hence I refer the reader to them for further details, particularly on the so-called 'mirror-like knowledge' (*ādarśajñāna*). Here it is however of some interest to

four paths,<sup>60</sup> everything shines forth and becomes [actually] visible.

Because it is purified, [also] the sight shines forth in the same manner. By practicing *yoga*, in this way he will meditate: all the conditions and antidotes<sup>61</sup> of an all-knowing and non-forgetful application of mindful-

quote the following three passages from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, which Wayman does not refer to explicitly: 1. (Vaidya 1963, p. 18) *yathā mahāmate darpaṇasya rūpagrahaṇam evaṃ khyātivijñānasyākhyāsyati* | (O Mahāmati, as there is seizing of the form by the mirror, so [the objects] will appear to the appearance-consciousness); 2. (Vaidya 1963, p. 25): *tad yathā mahāmate darpaṇāntargatāḥ sarvarūpāvabhāsāḥ samdṛśyante nirvikalpā yugapat evam eva mahāmate svacittadrśyadhārām yugapat tathāgataḥ sarvasattvānām viśodhayati nirvikalpām nirābhāsagocarām* | (O Mahāmati, it is like all the forms and appearances [that] are seen together in a mirror, non-conceptual and immediately; exactly so, O Mahāmati, the *tathāgata* purifies immediately the stream of visible objects [appearing] in the own minds of all beings, [so that those minds then become] non-conceptual and [become] domains of non-appearance); 3. (Vaidya 1963, p. 39): *tad yathā mahāmate darpaṇāntargatāni sarvarūpapratiimbakāni khyāyante yathāpratyaayatāḥ svavikalpanāc ca na tāni bimbāni nābimbāni bimbābimbadarśanataḥ | atha ca te mahāmate svacittadrśyavikalpāḥ khyāyante bālānām bimbākṛtayaḥ | evam eva mahāmate svacittapratibimbāni khyāyante ekatvānyatvobhayānubhayadr̥ṣṭyākāreṇa* | (O Mahāmati, it is like the reflections of all the forms [that] appear in a mirror out of the [object's] own distinction, in accordance to the [object's causal] conditions; and [they are] neither reflections nor non-reflections, being seen as [both] reflections and non-reflections; and then, O Mahāmati, these distinctions of visible objects [that] appear in the own minds of simpletons are deceitful reflections [or: reflection-configurations]. Exactly so, O Mahāmati, the reflections in one's own mind appear in the form of views of oneness, otherness, both, neither of the two).

In this regard, the following observation of Wayman is particularly worth of note: he explains that the mirror simile «was transferred to China, where one branch of the Ch'an school, following the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, applied the mirror metaphor to the mind; while another Ch'an school, turning to the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptural position, rejected this metaphor for the mind» (1974, p. 253). On this matter see also Démieville (1947, pp. 112-127). This confirms the heterogeneous approach, on matters of meditation, of the *Explanation*, which is strongly indebted to the *prajñāpāramitā* culture, while takes essential inspiration from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.

**60** The four paths here could allude to the stream-enterer (Pāli *sotāpanna*, Sanskrit *srotāpanna*), the once-returned (Pāli *sakadāgāmin*, Sanskrit *sakṛdāgāmin*), the never-returned (*anāgāmin*) and the *arahant*, which are however typical of the Hinayāna tradition. Interestingly enough, in the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra* we meet with the following passage, where the expression *lam bzi po* occurs and refers to the fundamental elements/practices of the Mahāyāna *bodhisattva* path (Braarvig 1993a, p. 124): *lam bzi po 'di dag ni byaṅ chub sems dpa' rnam kyī ye śes kyī tshogs sogs par 'gyur te | bzi gaṅ ze na | 'di lta ste pha rol tu phyin pa'i lam dan | sa'i lam dan | byaṅ chub kyī phyogs kyī lam dan | thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye śes kyī lam ste* | (I have uniformed Braarvig's transliteration of the Tibetan text to the way of citation used in the present article); translation in Braarvig (1993b, p. 477). Unfortunately, in the lack of further textual evidence, we cannot establish whether or not the *Explanation* makes use of *lam gl bzi* according to the same sense conveyed by *lam bzi po* in the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra*.

**61** The Tibetan term *gñen po* here probably refers to the so-called antidotes (Sanskrit *pratipakṣa*) to the disadvantages (Tibetan *ñes dmigs*, Sanskrit *ādīnava*) or deficiencies of meditation, which according to the Mahāyāna tradition are five: indolence (Tibetan *le lo*, Sanskrit *kausīdya*), being confused about the instructions (Tibetan *gdams ñag brjed pa*, Sanskrit *avavādasamhoṣa*), restlessness (Tibetan *rgod pa*, Sanskrit *auddhatya*) and dullness (Tibetan *byiñ ba*, Sanskrit *laya*), non-application (Tibetan *'du mi byed pa / mi rtsol*

ness (*smṛtyupasthāna*) encourage the root of mindfulness, which is the source of wisdom (*prajñā*).

This is why from [one] among the *sūtras* we are told thus: «Therefore, wisdom is a sword, mindfulness is a beautiful bow [and] sharp senses are an arrow».<sup>62</sup>

*ba*, Sanskrit *anabhisamkāra/anābhoga*), [over-]application (Tibetan *'du byed pa / rtsol ba*, Sanskrit *abhisamkāra/ābhoga*). See for instance *Madhyāntavibhāgakārikā* 4.4: *kausīdyam avavādasya sammoṣo laya uddhavaḥ | asaṃskāro'tha saṃskāraḥ pañca doṣā ime matāḥ ||*. The antidotes to these disadvantages are eight, as follows: trust (Tibetan *dad pa*, Sanskrit *śraddhā*), aspiration (Tibetan *'dun pa*, Sanskrit *chanda*), exertion (Tibetan *rtsol ba*, Sanskrit *vyāyāma*), pliancy (Tibetan *śin tu sbyaṅs pa*, Sanskrit *praśrabdhi*) are the remedies to indolence, mindfulness (Tibetan *dran pa*, Sanskrit *smṛti*) is the remedy to confusion about the instruction, full consciousness (Tibetan *śes bžin*, Sanskrit *samprajanya*) is the remedy to restlessness and dullness, application is the remedy to non-application and equanimity (Tibetan *btañ sñoms*, Sanskrit *upekṣā*) is the remedy to over-application. See for instance the explanation of Kamalaśīla in his *Bhāvanākrama* I (Namdol 1997, pp. 43-44, extant in Tibetan) and *Bhāvanākrama* III (Namdol 1997, p. 259, identical passage extant in Sanskrit), where however he speaks of six deficiencies. For an outlook of the treatment of the disadvantages and antidotes in the Tibetan context, see Hopkins (1983, pp. 71-80).

**62** Such a kind of metaphors occurs in several Buddhist Mahāyāna texts. The closest parallel to our text can be found in the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*, where we read indeed (Lhasa bKa'-gyur, PHal-cen, Ca 23a7): *śes rab ral gri yin te dran pa gzu mdzes dbaṅ po rno ba mda' yañ yin ||* (Wisdom is a sword, mindfulness is a beautiful bow and sharp senses are an arrow). On the basis of this excerpt, I have emended our Tibetan text *dbaṅ po rnon po ma yin no to dbaṅ po rnon po mda' yin no*. Another similar passage occurs in the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchāsūtra* 35ab (Vaidya 1961, p. 123): *maitra varma smṛti khaḍgam uttamaṃ śīla cāpam iṣu prajñupāyataḥ |* (Loving kindness an armour, mindfulness a sword, proper conduct an excellent bow, wisdom and [skillful] means an arrow). Furthermore, of particular interest here is the fifth section (on the *sudurjayābhūmi*) of the *Daśabhūmikāsūtra* - a text that is gathered, as is well-known, in the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra* -, whose stanza 12 makes recourse to the same kind of simile while describing at which stage of the *bodhisattva* meditation these 'weapons' are useful (Vaidya 1967, p. 83): *smṛti cāpa indriya iṣu anivartitāś ca samyakprahāṇa haya vāhana ṛddhipādāḥ | pañca balāḥ kavaca sarvapipūabhebyāḥ [=sarvaripūabhedyāḥ] sūrāṇivarti vidu pañcamī ākramanti ||*; translation in Honda (1968, p. 181). In the light of this last passage - in which explicit reference to the *bodhipakṣya dharmas* (practices helpful to enlightenment) is made - we are perhaps allowed to suspect, when not to suggest, that also the *Explanation* is here describing the moment of passing from the fourth to the fifth *bhūmi*. Besides, among other sources see also *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* 10.8 (Wayman 1999, p. 109).

In conclusion, according to the *Śatasahāsrikāprajñā[pāramitā]*, having constantly gazed and constantly meditated, the noble self-knowing knowledge (*svapratyātmāryajñāna*)<sup>63</sup> occurs by itself.<sup>64</sup>

Hence, when, longing for sight, longing for knowledge, longing for what is beyond, one has constructed all sorts of perfected mental fabrications, [one's] mind is inclined to delusion or distraction because of the absence of peace, and thereafter [such a state is] different from *samatha* and *vipaśyana*. [This] is not [what is] called the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*).

[When, on the contrary,] one does not fabricate the body, does not fabricate the mind, does not fabricate [any] thought, does not fabricate [any] speech, does not fabricate [any] way of activity, and is not distressed by the nature (*prakṛti*) of the *dharmatā*, one will faultlessly perform the suitable fourfold deportment (*īryāpatha*).

The end.

### 3.3 Tibetan Text

The text, like the most part of the Tibetan manuscripts found in Dunhuang, presents many characteristics of the old Tibetan orthography, such as the *gi gu rlog* (reversed *i*), the *ma ya btags* (the *ya* attached to the *ma*) and the *'a rten* (the supporting *'a*). Even though there is no occurrence of the *da drag* (the strong *da*) in the *Explanation*, it occurs in other texts collected in IOL Tib J 709. Moreover, some terms occur with a different orthography than the usual classical one as, for instance, *byañ cub* instead of *byañ chub*, and so on.

63 To my knowledge, this concept never occurs in the portions of the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* at my disposal (see Bibliography). However, it is recurrent in the *Lañkāvatārasūtra*, in which it is assimilated to the *tathāgatagarbha* and *nirvāṇa*. See (Vaidya 1963, p. 9): *tathāgatagarbhasvapratyātmāryajñānagocarasyaitat praveśo yat samādhiḥ paramo jāyata iti* || (This [is the] entrance into the domain of the noble knowledge [originated] by itself of the *tathāgatagarbha*, [in] which the highest *samādhi* is generated), and (Vaidya 1963, p. 81): *tathāgatāsvapratyātmāryajñānādihigamaṃ nirvāṇam iti vadāmi* || (The acquisition of the *tathāgata*'s noble knowledge [originated] by itself, I call [it] *nirvāṇa*). Also in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* 17ab we meet with a similar statement (Prasad 1991, p. 16): *ity evaṃ yo'vabodhas tat pratyātmajñānadarśanam* | (Thus, this understanding in such a way [namely, of things as they are,] is the vision [due to] the knowledge [originated] by itself). On the centrality of the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* in the Dunhuang cultural area see the recent Dotson (2013-2014).

64 The self-emergence of the knowledge of the *dharmatā* (= *tathāgatagarbha*) is one of the topics discussed also in text 4 of IOL Tib J 709.

## Editorial Conventions

I	<i>gi gu rlog</i>
‡	page ornamental sign head <i>mgo yig</i>
	<i>śad</i>
	double <i>śad</i>
●	string-hole area
[xx]	folios and/or line numbers
<xx>	emendation suggested
{xx}	original spelling

## Transliteration

[34a1] ‡ slob dpon byañ cub klu dbañ gis bśad pa' ||  
 byañ cub sems dpa'I bden pa'I tshig gañ že na || [2] 'dI lta ste ||  
 de ni gañ smra ba de byed || gañ byed pa de ● smra ba'o || yañ dran  
 bas brjod || brjod pas dran no ||  
 [3] śIn du yañ nI bag ldan ba ||  
 dbañ po rnams kyI phyir ● źIn mñam ||  
 dper na mñam ba'am gza' ba'I [4] thabs ||  
 dbugs kyañ bskyuñ žiñ bag dañ ldan ||  
 ● ci la yañ bag myed byas nas nI ||  
 gañ la yañ bag [5] bya gnas myed do ||  
 de ltar bag bya gnas myed la ||  
 de la śIn du bdag gis blta' ||  
 blta ba myed ciñ blta' [34b1] bar bya' ||  
 de tshe sems kyI 'od kyañ gsal ||  
 dag ciñ spro ba'I sems kyis nI ||  
 sgrIb pa rnams kyañ sel par [2] 'gyur ||  
 byañ chub sems dpa' gañ že na ||  
 chos ● rnams thams cad myi brjod pa'o ||  
 myI brjod pa ni [3] gañ že na ||  
 chos kyI chos ñId dran ba'o ||  
 chos kyI ● chos ñid dran ba nI ||  
 dran ba myed ciñ dran ba'am ||  
 [4] dmyIgs pa myed ciñ dmyigs pa'o ||  
 dmyigs pa ● myed ciñ brjod myed tshig ||  
 de nI dran ba myI brjed pa'o ||  
 [5] dran ba myI brjed de yañ nI ||  
 yañs śiñ lus khlod dbañ po phye ||  
 bag dañ ldan ba'I sems kyis ni ||  
 dbugs kyañ [35a1] ‡ śIn du bskyuñ bar bya ||  
 rkyañ gI go skabs myI dbye bar ||

spyod lam rnam bZIr sñoms par spyad | |  
 de ni [2] śes rab thabs mkhas pa'o | |  
 dbaṅ po drug phyē ● mñam ba'I thabs | |  
 mye loṅ śin du phyis nas su | |  
 [3] lam gI bZi mdor bZag pa la | |  
 thams cad gsa ● l žin snaṅ ba ste | |  
 dag pas mthoṅ ba gsal ba [4] ltar | |  
 rnal 'byor spyod pas de ltar bsgom | |  
 thams ● cad mkhyen pa myI brjed pa'I | |  
 dran ba ñe bar bZag pa'i | |  
 [5] rkyen daṅ gñen po thams cad nI | |  
 skul ma dran bar byed pa'I | |  
 gZi ni 'byuṅ gnas śes rab bo | |  
 de bas śes [35b1] rab ral gyI ste | |  
 dran ba gZu ru mdzes pa yin | |  
 dbaṅ po rnon po <mda'> {ma} yin no

žes mdo sde dag gi naṅ nas | | de skad [2] 'byuṅ bas na | | mdor na śes rab  
 stoṅ phrag brgya pa las 'byuṅ ba bZIn du | | yaṅ nas yaṅ du bltas | | yaṅ nas  
 [3] yaṅ du bsgoms na' | | 'phags pa raṅ gis rig ● pa'I ye śes raṅ 'byuṅ ṅo | |  
 de las mthoṅ 'dod | [4] śes 'dod | lhag 'dod de | sems bcos legs ● maṅ  
 po byas na | | sems 'khrul pa'am | | g.yeṅ [5] ba ma žI ba las spyogs te | |  
 žI gnas daṅ lhag mthoṅ cha ma mñam slan cad | | śes rab kyI pha rol du  
 phyin pa žes [36a1] † myI bya'o | |  
 lus myI bcos sems myi bcos | | bSam ba myi bcos | | smra ba myI bcos |  
 | spyod lam myi bcos te | | [2] chos ṅId kyI raṅ bZin myI 'khrugs pa' | | cI  
 bZin ● par spyod lam rnam bZIr myI ṅams par bgyI'o | | [3] || || || ● || || ||  
 rdzogs so' ||



**Appendix**  
**Reproduction of the Fac-simile**  
**of the Manuscript**

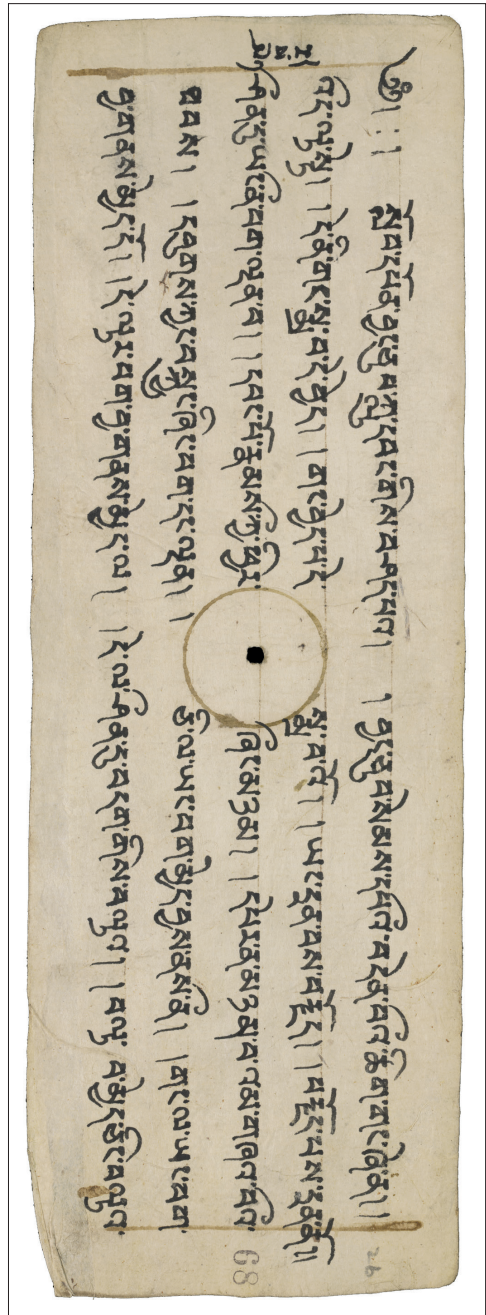
IOL Tib J 709

BL location Volume 14, folios 42-79 (the present work folios 68-70, corresponding to folios 34-36 of the Tibetan numeration)

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Dimensions 9 × 26 cm (Pothi)

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## **Qizil: an Interpretation of District Six, Caves 109-121 in Gunei**

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**Abstract** For over a century studies on the caves of Kuča were mainly focused on the paintings; little attention has been dedicated to cave architecture, while the way caves related to one another forming a living monastery has gone almost completely unnoticed. In previous studies I proposed a division of the site of Qizil in seven districts: among these, District Six was the one which presented most interpretative difficulties. In recent years the iconography of five painted caves has been the object of many studies, but the remaining 18 undecorated ones have been systematically ignored. Realizing how this district keeps on stimulating art historians' interest – other relevant studies are presently being carried out – the present work offers a more complete description and analysis by focusing on the unique assemblage of caves and groups of District Six; some essential features never mentioned before are also introduced here. Finally, the provisional interpretation of District Six as a special ritual area will contextualize it in the overall site of Qizil.

**Summary** 1 Description. – 2 Analysis of Some Elements. – 2.1 Internal Stairways. – 2.2 Repair and Renovation of Damaged Caves. – 2.3 Paintings and Painting Style. – 3 Interpretation. – 3.1 Function of the Caves. – 3.2 Monastic Cells: Who Lived in Them? – 3.3 Meditation Cells and Meditation. – 3.4 Conclusion.

**Keywords** Qizil caves. Caves function. Meditation cells. Soot.

For over a century the study of the Buddhist caves of the kingdom of Kuča, set on the northern artery of the Silk Road, north of the Taklamakan desert, has mainly focused on the paintings and texts found in them.<sup>1</sup> Successive generations of scholars have worked to achieve a better understanding of the kind of Buddhism which was practiced in this small kingdom, but much remains to be done. Scholarship needs to shift its focus from the study of selected images and individual caves to a more comprehensive approach that considers the rock monasteries in their entirety and follows their development through time. Formed of almost 400 caves hewn at different heights in the towering cliffs that run alongside the Muzart River, Qizil is the largest and most complex rock carved monastery of the ancient king-

<sup>1</sup> This research project has received generous support by the Peking University Endowment for the Humanities (北京大学人文基金).

dom of Kuča. The division of the site in seven functional districts serves to clarify our understanding of the site (Vignato 2006). District Six is the most difficult to interpret since it defies the precise functional definition, which is readily achieved in the other districts.

Although there is still no clear cut understanding of the role of District Six within the Qizil rock monastery, an extensive amount of scholarly endeavour has been expended on the iconography of the few decorated caves therein – the paintings from a handful of caves continue to draw the attention of art historians. In providing a preliminary description, analysis and interpretation of District Six this paper will discuss its unique assemblage of caves and cave groups. These features indicate the successive phases of development in this district and so by examining them an improved understanding of District Six can be reached. This should include the specific location of this district within the site of Qizil and of all the 23 remaining caves within the district, in addition the way caves related to one another, and of the successive phases of carving, remodelling and use. This will lead to a more accurate interpretation of this district and, consequently, of the iconography concentrated in its five painted caves (Fig. 1).

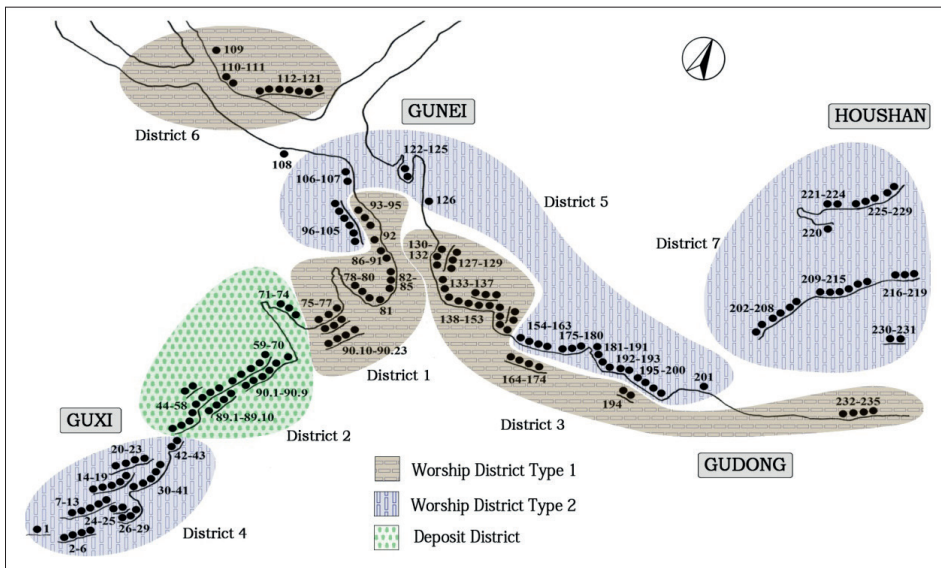


Figure 1. The layout of the rock monastery of Qizil. Besides the traditional naming of its different sections, the coloured parts indicate my proposed division in seven districts; District Six is in the upper left corner

## 1 Description

Scholars rarely consider the physical characteristics of the location at which a cave is carved. The relative position of a cave in the site, its relation to neighbouring caves, the quality of the rock in the general area, the daily amount of direct sunlight exposure, the distance from sources of humidity are all elements which, although they rarely appear in present day studies, would have been the primary concerns of the planners and builders of the caves. Take District Six in Qizil: it is located in the western section of Gunei. At this point the bottom of the gully only receives a few hours of direct sunlight a day. It is also damp almost year round with the humidity rising after even light rain. This explains why the caves are concentrated in the upper section of the northern cliff. This location would have received a greater number of sunlight hours in addition to being away from the damp. The district is only accessible from the South. Having walked through most of the north-south stretch of Gunei, the first visible cave is a monastic cell. The other caves come into view one after the other as one walks further into the valley. The arrangement is in sharp contrast with that of Guxi, Gudong and Houshan. Those caves receive more sunlight hours and are further removed from sources of humidity. However, the most significant detail is that these caves were carved in highly visible locations and could be seen from afar. From this we can ascertain that District Six was not a prime location, a site of last resort rather than the location of earliest caves.

District Six is the most difficult to interpret of the districts in Qizil, because it does not present a clear functional identity. In contrast, the other districts display a much more uniform content relying on caves or groups of caves of the same type. This lack of uniformity indicates that the caves in District Six underwent several alterations, restorations and additions, which moved the function of the district away from its original purpose. An understanding of the function of the district is further complicated by late caves which were carved into the remaining sections of viable rock due to a lack of space in other districts. The caves along the gully will be described from east to west (Fig. 2).

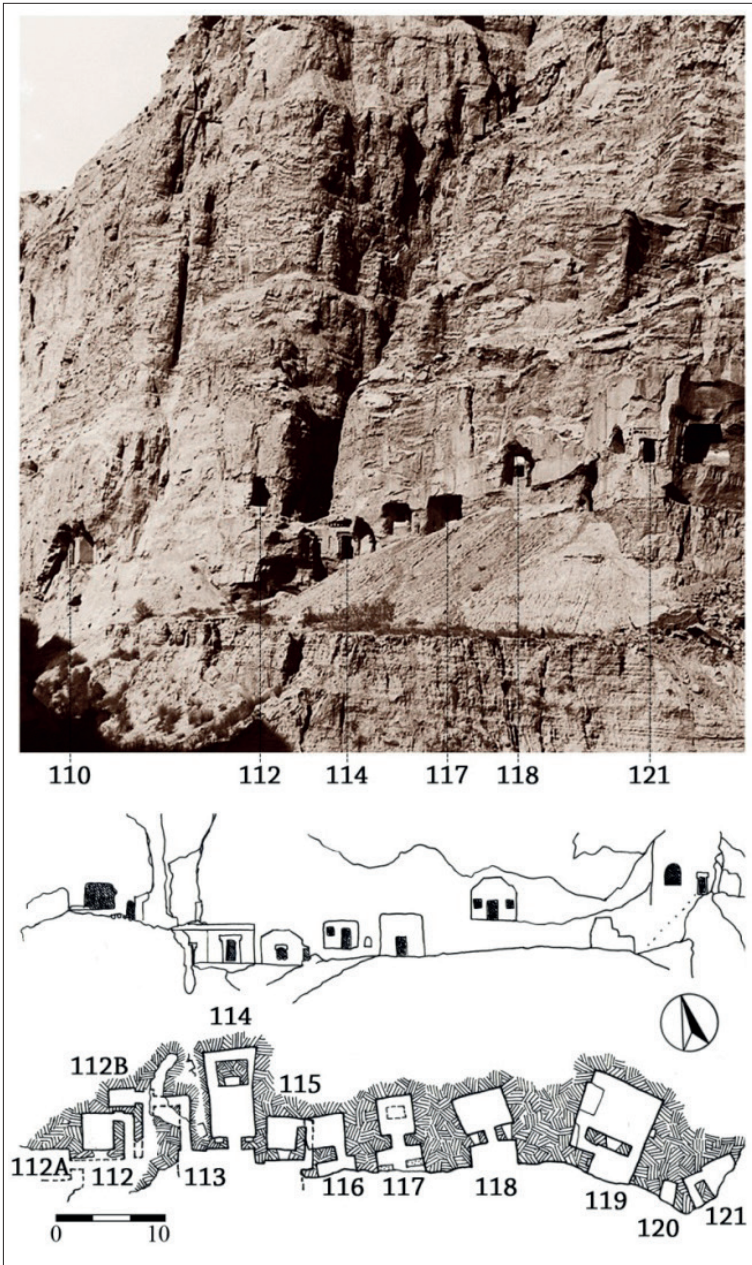


Figure 2. Plan, prospect and photograph of District Six. (Photograph: © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst/Photograph)

First is the group formed by Caves 120 and 121. It is carved in a high position on the cliff and is visible from a relative distance. Cave 120 is a small square cave well plastered with no traces of paintings. Its shape and size suggest it was a meditation cell. Cave 121 is a regular monastic cell, the front wall of the main chamber has completely collapsed, but the fireplace well preserved. Note the location, Cave 121, a monastic cell, overlooks the only entrance into the district. This sort of cell, which might have served as a residence for a gatekeeper or guardian, is a common feature in the rock monasteries of Kuča.

The group is currently inaccessible. A major collapse occurred during the monastic period. The cliff face collapsed for a depth of approximately three meters. This caused significant damage to not only the original tunnelled staircase, traces of which are still extant, but also the stone carved antechamber of the group. The staircase was subsequently restored and a cantilevered timber structure was built in front of the two caves to replace the antechamber. Through these repairs, the two caves could be still kept in use (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Caves 120 (center, upper position) and 121 (right). Note the straightened section of the rock and the traces of carved steps below Cave 120. Notice also the postholes used for the restoration of the stairway as well as those used for the installation of the soffit of a cantilevered structure above the doorway of Cave 121. Cave 119 (right) is below and to the left; Cave 119A I in front of it, covered by wooden poles

Below and to the west lies Cave 119. It is a large cave that has so far evaded any significant scholastic attention. Its final incarnation appears to have been as a lecture hall. The abundant construction marks still extant allow for a clear reconstruction of the transformation and development of this cave. The antechamber has a longitudinal rectangular plan. The front section of the chamber is damaged. It is comparatively small for such a large main chamber. Even more unusual is the presence of two entrances. One, a doorway leads straight through the main wall into the main chamber, while the other, carved into the right wall of the antechamber, leads to a short corridor which then turns ninety degrees before entering the main chamber through its front wall. A closer examination reveals that the main chamber was created by merging two smaller and independent caves, each of which had its own entrance. At some point the requirement for a cave of this type and function was deemed so important to the functioning of this district that two smaller caves (storages?) were sacrificed in its construction. The importance of the cave can be inferred from the numerous renovations it underwent, which I detail below (Fig. 4).

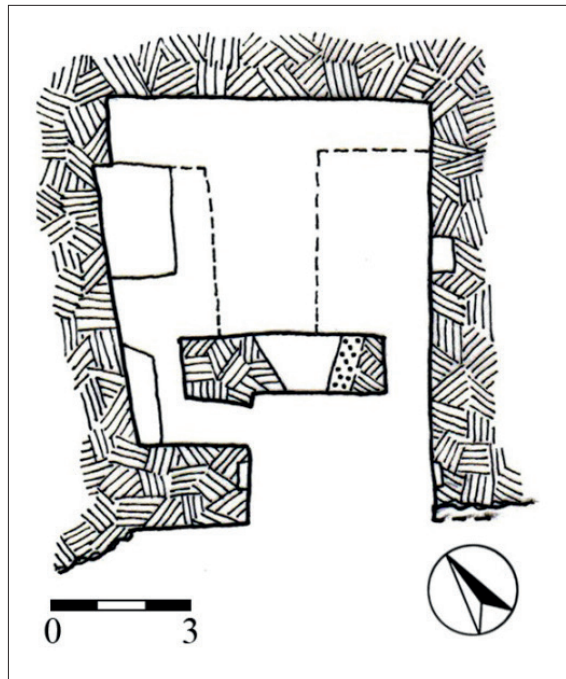


Figure 4. Plan of Cave 119. The dotted lines indicate the size of two original cells which were successively merged into one cave in a late period

Cave 119A was discovered in 2000 in front of Cave 119. The cave has partially collapsed. Only part of the main chamber and a narrow tunnel with four small cells opening on its main and side walls are extant (Xinjiang Qiuci

shiku yanjiusuo 2001, pp. 62-63; Howard, Vignato 2015, pp. 87-97). Although asymmetrical and without traces of plaster, it can be interpreted as a meditation cave, since comparable caves can be found in the Kuča area (Fig. 5).

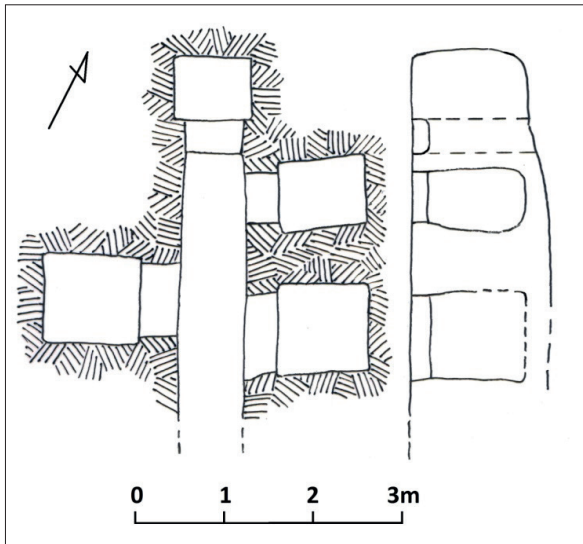


Figure 5. Cave 119A, plan and section. Adapted from: Xinjiang Qiuci shiku yanjiusuo 2001, p. 61

Caves 116, 117 and 118 take up the central section of the cliff face. They are carved at different levels and relatively far from one another. Any likely connecting passages between the caves were lost in the collapse of the cliff face. There is nothing to indicate a unified plan. All three are square caves are markedly different in size, plan (of both the antechamber and the main chamber), and ceiling type. All three caves were decorated in Style A (First Indo-Iranian Style), forming the highest concentration of decorated caves in the district. The narrative and layout of the décor of each of the three caves is different.

Cave 118 is unique in several ways. Starting with the stone carved antechamber which shows signs of having collapsed and been successively remodelled. The ceiling of the main chamber is a transversal barrel vaulted ceiling, unusual in a square cave. The carving of this cave is exceptionally precise. This can best be seen when looking back at the front wall of the main chamber. From this perspective the matching oblique angles of the lintels of the doorway and both windows can be clearly observed. Such mathematical attention to detail is not found in any other cave in Kuča. The layout of the décor is also unique. The centre of the main wall, opposite to the doorway, is decorated with a single scene - the Story of King Māndhātara enclosed within one of the largest and most complex decorative frames in Kuča (Satomi Hiayama 2010). A band of decoration (circa 40 cm



wide) runs along the three walls, intersected by the windows and doorway on the front wall. Most of the narrative was concentrated in the upper part of the cave, that is on the ceiling and the two lunettes. This layout is not replicated in any other cave in Kuča (Fig. 6).

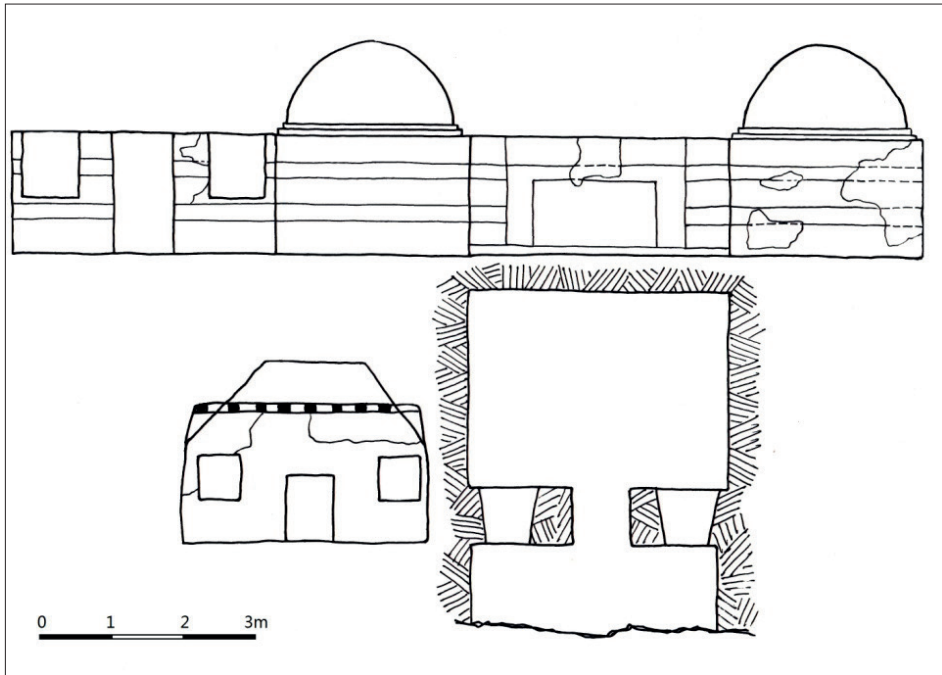


Figure 6. Cave 118. Below: plan and view of the restored façade. Above: the disposition of the paintings on the four walls of the main chamber (starting from the left): front wall, right wall, main wall, left wall

The iconography of Caves 118, as well as that of Cave 117, 116 and 110 below, was first investigated by Grünwedel (1912, pp. 102-119), thereafter large sections of these paintings were removed to Germany and are stored in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst in Berlin – some were lost during World War II.

Cave 117 presents another set of interesting features. Its antechamber, wider than the main chamber, is the largest antechamber in District Six; its original depth cannot be established since the front section of it has collapsed. Not only is it large, but its floor is also carved at a lower level than that of the main chamber. The ceiling consists of carved rafters, imitating timber architecture, set against a flat ceiling. There are at least three different layers of painting in the antechamber, main chamber and the reveals of the doorway between the two rooms. The plan of the main chamber is square, somewhat irregular, topped by a truncated pyramid

ceiling. An altar set slightly back is atypically rectangular, as most of the extant altars in square caves Qizil are perfectly square. This altar would have held the statuary which would have served as the main focus of worship. The narrative painted on the main wall would have acted as a background to said statues. A right understanding of the décor is complicated by the fact there are three superimposed layers of paintings, of which part are in the original place, others are in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst in Berlin. The final hurdle is the thick strata of soot covering walls and ceiling which serves to further obscure the paintings. The paintings are displayed in rows of seated Buddha and in horizontal registers. The identification of the painted narrative requires in depth investigation (Zin 2015, pp. 19-27). Sections of this décor are presently kept in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst in Berlin.

The importance of this cave for future research cannot be underestimated. Once the themes and style of the three strata of the paintings are completely understood and described, we will have the clearest evidence not only of the development of style, but, most importantly, a clear view of the successive stages of development of the narrative, and the evolution of the doctrine therein implied. Scientific testing of pigments from each of the layers of painting would likely shed light on the materials and techniques used in different periods. This data could then in turn be compared with materials from other caves. These murals can shed considerable light on several aspects of these caves if appropriately studied.

Cave 116 is the last of the three caves painted in Style A. Its relative position, compared to that of the Caves 115 and 177, suggests that it was the last of the three to be carved. Part of the rock-carved antechamber collapsed but was later restored by adding a cantilevered structure. The plan of the main chamber is a transverse rectangle topped by a transverse barrel-vaulted ceiling with a flat crown. The structure is somewhat similar to that of Cave 118, with a similar cornice around the four walls. The front wall, however, is different with a doorway on the left and a relatively small window on the right. The placement of the paintings is again unique: the main painting, surrounded by a large cornice, occupied almost entirely the right wall; it is presently heavily damaged, but it might have represented a monk (or Buddha?) seated in meditation. The other painting occupied the left lunette; presently its content is barely visible and originally showed monks meditating in cemeteries (Howard, Vignato 2015, pp. 108-109). The decor included also an ornamental strip painted in the upper-middle section of the walls (Fig. 7).

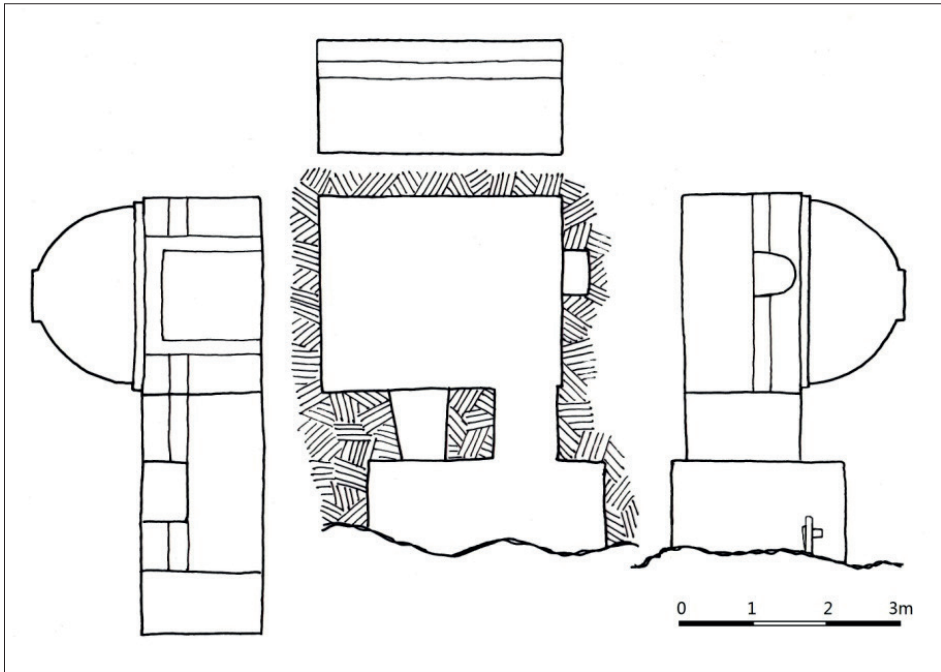


Figure 7. Cave 116. Plan and disposition of the paintings on the four walls of the main chamber (on the left): front wall and right wall; (above) main wall; (right) left wall of the main chamber and left wall of the antechamber, with the marks of a groove used for the support of the cantilevered wooden structure in front of the cave

Continuing westwards, the next few caves form the most complex group in the district. The original core consisted of central pillar Cave 114 and monastic cell Cave 115, each with its individual antechamber carved out of the rock. A collapse has seriously damaged the antechamber of Cave 114, causing the loss of crucial information. The remaining features, however, are sufficient to reconstruct the original state of the group. The caves were completely carved out of the rock and accessed through a doorway carved in the front wall of the antechamber of Cave 114. Cave 115 was then accessed through the doorway carved into the left wall of the antechamber of Cave 114. Following the collapse of its original antechamber a timber balcony was then installed (described below). It is likely during this phase that the group was expanded by widening the antechamber westward to make space for Cave 113 – although this is a numbered cave it was actually an internal stairway giving access to the caves carved further up the cliff (Fig. 8).

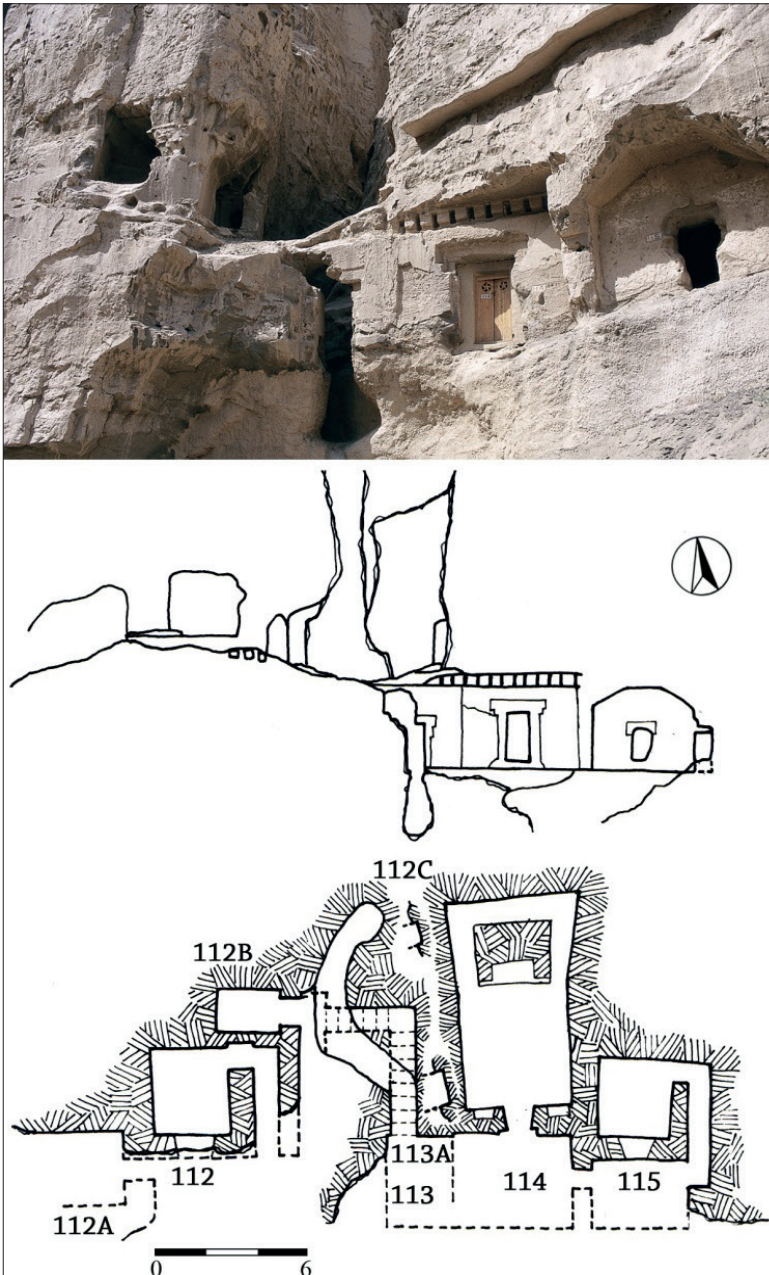


Figure 8. Group 112A-115. The original core of the group was formed of Caves 114-115. It was then enlarged to comprise the stairway Cave 113 and all the other caves, carved at the upper levels – Caves 112A, 112, 112B, 112C, 113A

A cursory examination of characteristics of Cave 114, reveals it to be a regular central pillar cave all be it with a uniquely large niche at the centre of the main wall. This was surrounded by the remains of a three-dimensional rendering of a mountainous landscape. On the main wall of the niche - not visible when the main statue was in its place - was painted a bodhisattva. A repository was excavated into the floor of the niche and then covered with wooden planks. Atypical was also the complex wooden structure forming the cornice on the side and front walls. One peculiar feature of the decor in the rear areas is the rows of nuns painted on the inner walls of the corridors. Again, all the paintings are blackened with soot.

The fact that monastic cell Cave 115 could be accessed only through the doorway opened on the left wall of the antechamber of Cave 114 means that Cave 115 was either a contemporary or later feature, and that the two caves were related. A door was installed over the entrance to the monastic cell in order to grant the occupant some privacy. The atypical plan of the entrance areas of the monastic cell, with one extra stretch of the corridor than normal also served to improve privacy.

The superimposed features on the cliff irrefutably establish that the internal stairway - Cave 113 - was a later addition to the core group formed by Caves 114 and 115, a crucial piece of information that assigns a relatively late dating to all the caves reached through it. They are monastic cell Cave 112 and three meditation cells intended for prolonged periods of meditation - Caves 112A, 112B and 113A. Still higher up is a small cell. It is regularly carved with an arched soffit, plastered and painted with uniform firebrick paint - provisionally called Cave 112C; it is a meditation cell of the type used for short periods of meditation. A more detailed discussion of the caves of this upper section of the group is beyond the remit of this paper, but as the above description indicates the caves in the upper reaches were carved chiefly for meditation with one residential cave, the monastic cell Cave 112. Since none of these caves were decorated Cave 114 remained the exclusive ritual focus of this enlarged group.

Caves 110, 111 and 111A, form a small group carved in a very high position on the cliff. They are relatively isolated in comparison to the caves described so far. Due to their location at the inner most end of the district they had to be carved very high on the cliff since this was the best possible location, in terms of rock quality and sunlight hours, even though it required the construction of an inner staircase in order to reach them safely. The remains of the stairway are now clearly visible due to the collapse of a large section of the cliff. The stairway ended on a level with the floor of their shared antechamber. This chamber was originally carved completely out of the rock. The antechamber displayed an 'L' shape plan, with a wider space in front of Caves 111 and 111A, while the space in front of Cave 110 was narrower (Fig. 9).

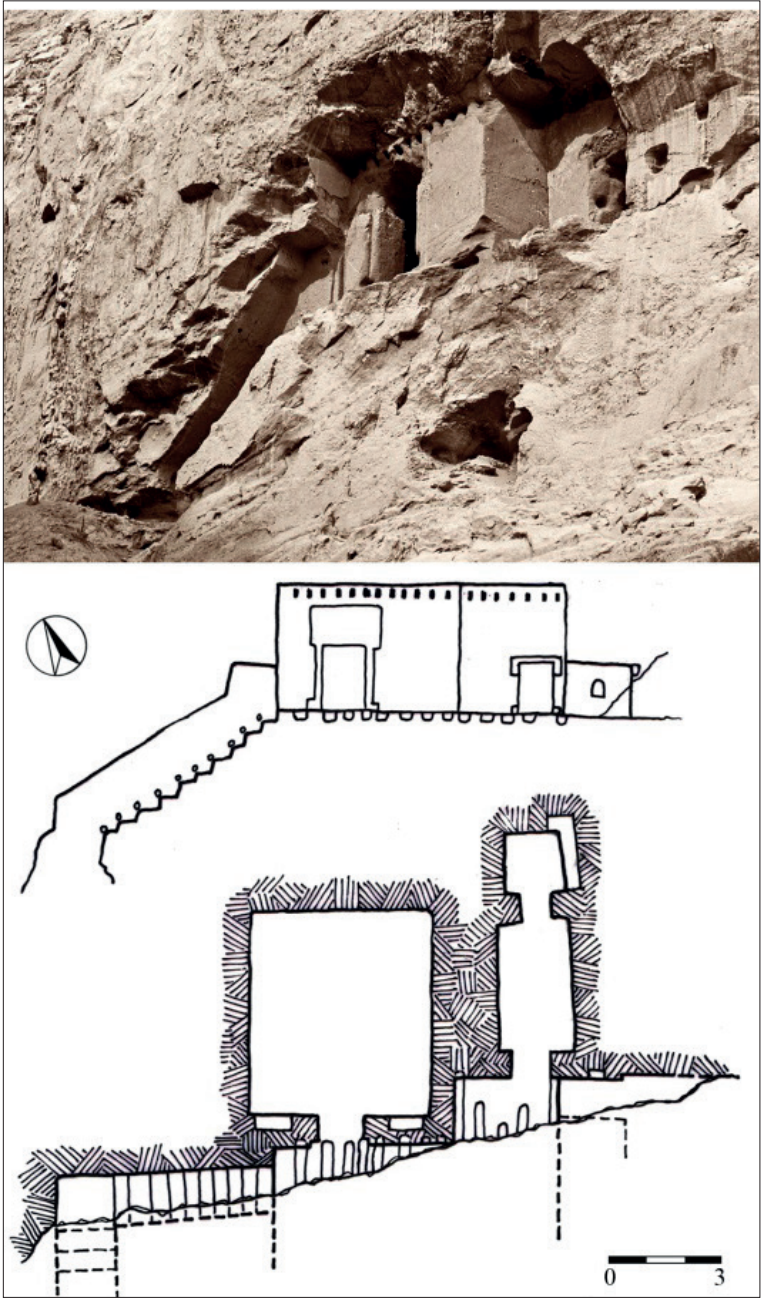


Figure 9. Group 110-111A. Notice the stairway from the left and the partially remaining rock-carved antechamber in front of the caves

The first cave encountered upon reaching the top of the stairway was Cave 110, a square cave the side walls of which show the largest number of episodes of Shakyamuni's life of any cave in Qizil. The longitudinal barrel vaulted ceiling creates a lunette above the main wall with a representation of Mara's temptation of Shakyamuni, this is balanced by a second lunette above the doorway, which depicts a Bodhisattva preaching in a heavenly palace (Fig. 10).

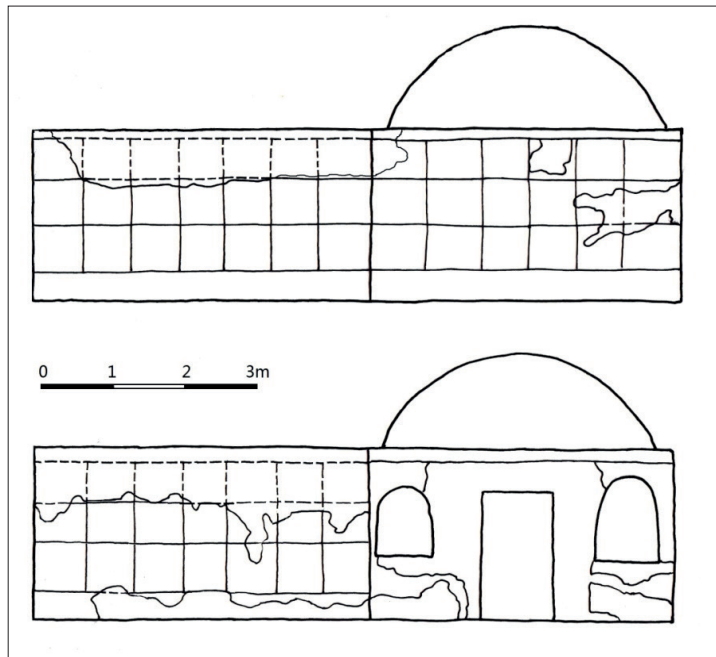


Figure 10. Cave 110, layout of the paintings in the lateral walls. Top, left to right, right and main wall. Below: left and front walls

Cave 111 has an atypical structure, the only cave of this type in Kuča: besides the shared antechamber, it consisted of undecorated main and inner chambers plastered but not whitewashed, and although there are no traces of the fireplace, it is blackened by soot. These characteristics, together with the fact that the cave was sufficiently large as to allow a person to sleep within it, suggest that it might have been used as a monastic cell. Lastly, on the left wall of the antechamber a doorway gave access to Cave 111A, placed at a right angle compared to Caves 110-111. This cave has now completely collapsed, but we can still identify it by the remaining inner reveal of its doorway, the marks used to install the door-frame and part of the right wall of the main chamber. This cave can be interpreted as a storage cave on the basis comparison with similar caves.

The westernmost end of District Six is the head of the valley. It is the

most secluded area in Qizil. The gorge was formed and then unceasingly reshaped by the gushing rainwater which collects in the plateau above and then finds its way out in this direction. After every collapse the newly exposed façade weathers and erodes, to collapse and expose new sections of the cliff, in a relentless process. The damage of the cliffs in the last few centuries has been severe, as can be ascertained by briefly surveying the area. We might safely assume that there were originally more caves the few that remain. Hopefully those preserved, Caves 109, 109A and 109B, are a significant sample. All damaged to a different degree, we can see that although they are all different in plan and size they can all be assigned to the meditation cave type. The most interesting feature is a row of four meditation cells collectively called Cave 109B, carved in a very high position and presently unreachable. The dimensions of the small and much damaged Cave 109 suggest that it was a cell for individual meditation; Cave 109A, the front part of which has collapsed. It is well plastered and whitewashed and has the same shape and width as the tunnelled caves of Subeši and Mazabaha, which are considered to be meditation cells for collective meditation. If my interpretation of these caves is correct, the area we are considering, the most remote in Qizil, was dedicated to meditation (Fig. 11).

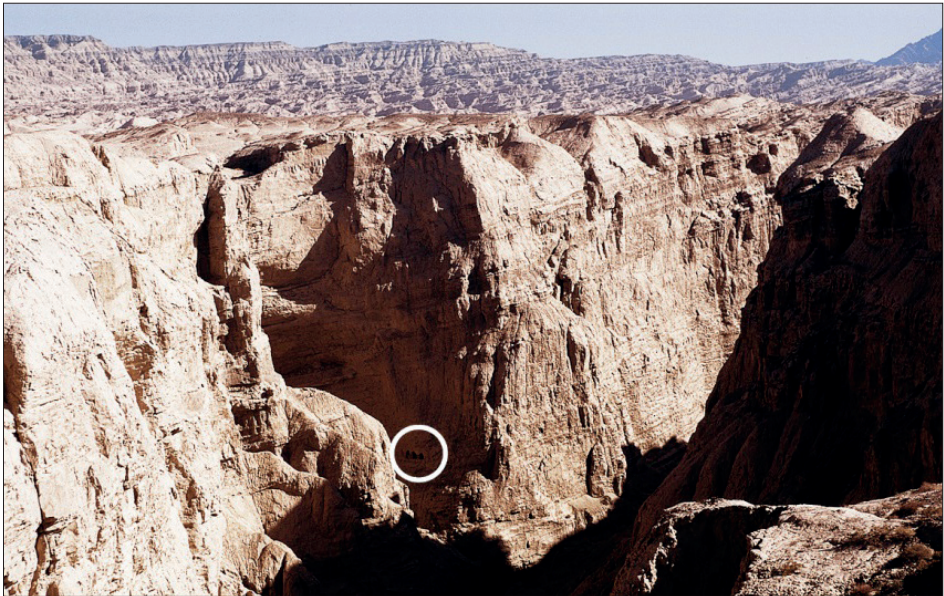


Figure 11. Cave 109A, actually four meditation cells, in its surroundings. The cells appear as small dots at the centre of the cliff



## 2 Analysis of Some Elements

### 2.1 Internal Stairways

A functional rock monastery was not simply the sum of a larger or smaller number of caves and surface buildings, some of them decorated and others were devoted to humbler functions. To be operative a monastery needed to have its different parts – districts, groups and individual caves – connected in a meaningful way. Regrettably, the structures that linked caves and groups to one another are among the most damaged features of the site, not to mention the most understudied. The types of structures referred to here can be described as ‘connective architecture’ (McDonald 1986, pp. 32 ff.). Although there are many forms of connective architecture – paths or walkways, assembly spaces in the open, structures connecting a number of caves, tunnels and stairways – this paper will only discuss one type, namely the internal stairway, which is crucial to the understanding of District Six in Qizil.

In studying caves carved in a high position on a cliff, the first question that needs to be considered is how they could be reached safely. Different solutions were possible, and the cave-makers chose the one that could best fit the nature and inclination of the cliff. The one preferred in District Six was the internal stairway.

Internal stairways are stairways carved into the cliff; they are sloping tunnels with carved steps, which made the ascent to an upper level of the cliff easy and safe. This type of architecture was relatively common in Qizil. In District Six there are three examples: the one climbing up to Caves 110-111A, a second giving access to Caves 112-113A, which has been numbered as Cave 113, and a third one leading to Caves 120-121.

Of the three internal stairways in District Six, the one giving access to the group formed by Caves 110-111A is the best preserved and so its construction is easier to understand. The collapse of a large section of the cliff where this group was carved caused damage to the rock-carved antechamber and the internal stairway – to an estimated depth of at least two meters. This collapse exposed the inner stairway, but it remained sufficiently safe to be kept in use (Fig. 9). A detailed reconstruction of its original structure can be achieved from the extant features. From the shape of the ceiling we know that it comprised two flights of stairs with a landing between them. A lower short flight of stairs, perpendicular to the cliff façade, led to the landing; from the left side of the landing, a second longer flight, that ran parallel to the cliff façade, led to the antechamber carved in front of the caves. The steps were not perfectly identical, the riser height was 25 to 35 cm, while the tread depth was 35 to 40 cm. Based on similar and better preserved internal stairways, we can assume that the lower entrance was protected by a door; marks for the installation of a second door at the top of the stairway are still clearly visible.

The second is Cave 113, which is an internal stairway. It currently serves as a channel for the flow of rainwater into Gunei and therefore almost all evidence of its former use has been eroded. The steps are not easily discerned, likely why the official comprehensive catalogue of the Qizil caves does not identify this cave correctly, recording it as a square cave. It consists of two flights of steps and a landing. The entrance retains installation marks for a door-frame. The first flight cuts straight into the cliff face to a height and depth of approximately ten steps before coming to a landing. A second, shorter, flight of steps then continues from the right side of the landing (Fig. 12).



Figure 12. The left wall of stairway Cave 113. The steps have been almost completely eliminated by the water gushing through, with few traces remaining in the lower section of the wall. Notice the space appositively carved in the reveal for the open shutter, aiming at allowing for the maximum width of the passage

Caves 120-121 were carved in a very high position on the cliff. The exterior section has crumbled down almost completely, destroying the stairway leading to the antechamber and the two caves that lead off it. Only a few marks reveal the original situation. Relying on them and on the data offered by the two other internal stairways described above, it can be as-

sumed that the first flight of steps cut perpendicular into the facade, this was then followed by a landing and then another flight of steps parallel to the cliff facade. In this respect the internal stairway was much similar to other structures of the same type; what is unusual is the presence of large square postholes carved at a regular distance on the cliff, just below the level of the steps, as if to support a string-board. Their presence suggests that the internal stairway collapsed and was restored by carving postholes and inserting beams into them, while the opposite end was supported by a wooden structure. Once the springboards were secured, the wooden steps could be installed (Fig. 3). Following the collapse of the original internal stairway, the caves in such a high position on the cliff were kept in use by constructing an outer timber stairway, which rested against the cliff, as a replacement of the earlier stone carved one.

All of the internal stairways in District Six underwent repairs, although they were not as dramatic as those described in the case of the stairway leading to Caves 120-121. The soft mudstone of the steps evidently wore down easily and required regular up-keep. Small peg-holes were carved into the inner and out walls of the stairway on a line with the outer lip of each step. Rods were then inserted into these holes and a layer of gesso was then poured over the tread. The gesso is now lost, but these small peg holes present in all the internal stairways indicate that regular maintenance was taking place.

Before leaving this topic, the sheer amount of rock which had to be removed in order to build an internal stairway needs to be considered. The volume of stone which need to be excavated was in some instances superior to that of the caves it served. The internal stairways required a great amount of labour. Extra labour would also have been required carve caves in the upper reaches of the cliff, I have suggested – relying also in a large set of other data – the following general rule for Qizil: the lower reaches and best part of the cliffs in Qizil were exploited first, while the upper sections of the cliffs – which required large amounts of extra work – were only used after the more convenient sections were fully used up.

## 2.2 Repair and Renovation of Damaged Caves

All the caves have suffered a great deal of damage. A quick look at the cliffs where the caves were carved leaves no doubt about the degree of deterioration suffered since the monastic period when the site was occupied. Larger or smaller collapses appear to have occurred throughout the period of occupation. Work would have been required following these collapses in order to keep the caves in use. In District Six repairs and renovations are so numerous that almost the whole range of restoration techniques employed in Kuča can be observed here. Caves of one type were often

transformed into other types of caves or caves that were added to preexisting groups. Partly collapsed rock-carved antechambers were repaired by installing cantilevered timber structures. In terms of internal structures architectural elements within a cave could be modified by chiselling away or adding material; new plaster or successive coats of whitewash could also be applied. In the case of decorated caves they were often partially or completely repainted. The fact that the caves in District Six underwent heavy restoration demonstrates that the development of this district was not a straightforward process and what we see today is the result of a prolonged period of cave construction and restoration. The importance of making a precise distinction among elements of different periods present in a cave and the need to assign them to the period they belong to before undertaking any kind of specific studies of a cave cannot be over stated. Without this basic work, elements belonging to different periods are looked upon as contemporary which in turn undermines the research.

Caves 110-111A being well preserved provides the clearest case study. As previously mentioned it was reached through an internal stairway and had a rock carved antechamber which was shared by all of the three caves that formed the group. A reconstruction of the doorway, its frame and of the internal stairway clearly indicates that the whole antechamber was completely carved out of the rock. We might safely assume that light entered through one or more windows carved in the front wall as in the case of the Five Joined Caves (68-72) in Qumtura, a clear example of such a solution.

After their construction, the caves were used until the exterior section of the cliff collapsed, causing great damage to the front part of the antechamber and exposing the stairway; at that point the three caves could no longer be safely used. A large repair was then undertaken with the aim of replacing the collapsed section of the rock carved antechamber with a cantilevered timber structure. Thirteen grooves were carved across the remaining sections of the floor. Robust joists were then inserted into the beams projecting outwards (presently circa 90 cm long in front of Cave 110 and circa 170 cm in front of Cave 111). Smaller holes carved just below the ceiling on the main wall held rafters (12 postholes in front of Cave 110 and 7 in front of Cave 111). Once joists and rafters were in place and connected by vertical posts, they formed a solid timber structure imbedded into the rock, which was further stabilized by wooden planks fastened onto joists to form the floor, while railings inserted between the vertical posts ensured safety. A roof protected from the elements as well as from the inevitable falling rocks. The exposed stairway was considered sufficiently safe, in spite of the missing outer wall, and so was not restored. Indeed, it remained in use until a decade ago (Fig. 9).

Similar repairs of collapsed antechambers are numerous and show that it was a common practice to bring damaged caves back into use. For ex-

ample, the restoration carried out in front of Caves 113-114. This group originally developed from the original core consisting of Caves 114 and 115, each with its individual antechamber carved out of the rock. After a collapse of the exterior part of the cliff caused a major damage to the antechamber of Cave 114 – the antechamber of Cave 115 was spared for the most part – restoration was carried out by inserting a cantilevered timber structure very similar to that in front of Caves 110-111A. This new timber antechamber also incorporated Cave 113 (Fig. 8).

The antechamber of Cave 118 was likewise carved out of the rock. Its plan was rectangular with a truncated pyramid-like ceiling, a fairly common ceiling type in antechambers serving a single cave. The collapse of the cliff face between Caves 116 and 119 destroyed the front part of the antechamber of Cave 118. The cave was subsequently kept in use by adding a cantilevered timber structure, whose installation marks are still clearly visible. The repair was somewhat complicated by the shape of the ceiling which called for short lateral walls, made higher by cutting away the sloping sides of the truncated pyramidal ceiling to join a newly carved horizontal groove on the main wall just above door and windows. The inner ends of the rafters were then inserted into this groove to form the upper section of the cantilevered structure and also the support for a dropped ceiling. The level of the floor, lower than the one in the main chamber, is the result of heavy erosion which has obliterated the grooves carved on the floor where the joists that formed the foundation of the cantilevered structure were inserted. Some of the postholes which held the inner ends of these joists are still visible at the foot of the main wall in spite of modern restorations. Two grooves carved at about 150 cm from the floor on both lateral walls, seem to have been used to insert reinforcements of the front part of the newly set up wooden structure (Fig. 6).

A very similar restoration was carried out in the antechamber of Cave 116, the process here was more straightforward, since the original ceiling was flat and there was no need to elevate the lateral walls to set up the cantilevered structure. In this case, the outermost of the three layers of plaster was used to embed the beam into the horizontal groove carved on each sidewall at about 150 cm from the floor, a structure similar to that seen in Cave 118 (Fig. 7).

The front part of the antechamber of Cave 117 was not restored after the collapse. In this case a different solution was devised. The original floor of the antechamber was approximately 30 cm lower than the floor of the main chamber. This can be ascertained from the percussion marks on the remaining three walls. The present floor level of the antechamber is approximately 80 cm lower than the main chamber. It seems that after the collapse of the front part of the antechamber its floor was excavated as to facilitate the access from below and, because of the closeness to the ground, there was no need to build a timber balcony.

Modifications were also carried out in the antechamber of Cave 119, which in spite of the collapse of its front part it was not restored with timber structures. The height and width of the window was modified by carving a corresponding area of the ceiling controlled the amount of light entering the main chamber, this modification served to improve the functionality of the main chamber.

Other larger or smaller repairs were carried out within the main chambers. The walls of the main chamber of Cave 119[2] are covered with five layers of plaster, each of these were covered with several coats of white-wash. These minor repairs, each of which was part of routine upkeep of the cave, are important because they indicate that the cave was used for a prolonged period of time. The fact that it was regularly whitewashed, when it was not completely re-plastered, suggests that it was an important cave. The gesso flooring in the main chamber of Cave 117 is another case of a routine repair. Since the space used to circumambulate the altar was limited and saw a lot of foot traffic which meant that, this part of the gesso flooring was given to wear out. In this case the damaged part was sawn out and eliminated. The resulting hole was then filled with new gesso.

### 2.3 Paintings and Painting Style

There are only a few painted caves in District Six: Caves 110, 114, 116, 117 and 118. In square Caves 116 and 118 the paintings are concentrated in the main chamber, while the antechambers appear to have been simply whitewashed. The antechamber of Cave 117, instead, was fully painted. All these caves were painted according to the typical canon of Style A (First Indo-Iranian Style, see Howard, Vignato 2015, pp. 4-5). Cave 114 is the only central pillar cave in this district. As is customary in central pillar caves its main chamber and rear areas were both painted in Style B (Second Indo-Iranian Style). The same style was used to decorate Cave 110, a square cave. The iconography of the paintings in these five caves has been discussed for over a century and it will continue to be the object of future studies. Suffice to say that narrative in each cave differs from that of others – as discussed above. It is remarkable that the layout of the painting is also different in each cave, this in addition to the atypical layouts and subjects represented, which are unique in Kuča. A very concise account of the different layouts clarifies this situation.

The three caves painted according to Style A – Caves 116, 117 and 118 – each had a distinct layout. Cave 116 presents two large paintings. One occupies the right wall, while the other fills the left lunette – that is, one occupies a lower section of the cave the other an upper section in the opposite wall, creating an asymmetry that is further accentuated by the



Figure 13. Median strip of Cave 114 (top) and Cave 118 (bottom). Notice the straight line of the diamond grid pattern in both caves, unseen in other caves of Qizil. (Source: *Zhongguo shiku* 1996, pls. 128 and 150)

horizontal band of decoration that runs along the walls. The barrel vaulted ceiling was simply covered by a layer of whitewash and left undecorated. Cave 118 is architecturally similar to Cave 116, the main painting is on the main wall; horizontal bands of decoration run along the side and front walls. Most of the paintings are concentrated in the upper section of the cave, which includes both lunettes and the ceiling, a very peculiar and unique layout. Cave 117 was completely painted, including antechamber and main chamber. Both chambers have three layers of paintings, each following different themes, the last one covered by thick layer of soot, which makes the reading of the décor very problematic.

We turn now to the two caves painted in Style B - Caves 110 and 114 - which were fully painted. The paintings of Central pillar Cave 114 are typical for this type of cave: on the apex of the ceiling is a median strip and diamond grids on the two haunches, along the sidewalls are panels with preaching scenes, and themes connected with the nirvana in the rear areas; the chief exception is the painted Bodhisattva in the large niche of the main wall (the background for a now lost statue). Cave 110 the layout of the painting of consists of three superimposed rows of square panels on

the main and side walls; the largest representations were painted on the lunettes above the main and front walls; the ceiling was decorated with a median strip and diamond grids on the two haunches.

The situation of District Six, compared with that of other districts of Qizil, is uncharacteristic. Usually Style B paintings in Qizil are found in central pillar caves which are the ritual centre of a group. In this regard cave 114 can be considered a typical case, while Cave 110 is not. Square caves painted in Style A are typically perfectly square in plan with a domed ceiling, forming groups with monastic cells. The three caves painted in Style A do not present these traits and each of the three caves presents a narrative and layout that are unique cases in Kuča. A further complication is the presence of unusual features in both Caves 114, painted in Style B, and 118, painted in Style A. In both instances the median strip is enclosed by wavy lines, while in most caves the median strip is much indented, since it is formed of the space left by the diamond grids on the two haunches of the ceiling (Fig. 13).

Moreover, another uncommon element in the median strip of Caves 114 and 118 is a strainer (?) carried by one of the flying monks (or is he a Buddha?). These are the only two instances in Kuča in which this implement is depicted. In summary, Cave 114 and 118 differ in architecture, content of the décor and painting style, but share common elements in the layout and content of the of the median strip.

Although iconographic studies will continue to be carried out by specialists, this paper aims to stress the interesting elements emerge when we compare varied components or aspects of painted caves from the same district. The results of such comparisons can lead to a better understanding of the caves, their purpose and function.

### 3 Interpretation

#### 3.1 Function of the Caves

The rock monasteries of Kuča present a variety of cave types, not always properly labelled. These misnomers in turn jeopardize the correct interpretation of the cave function. Moreover, caves of the same type may not necessarily have fulfilled the same function. The research methods for studying the caves from a functional perspective are still in a pioneer phase, careful attention needs to be paid to several elements, such as the relative position of a cave in the site and its relation to its neighbouring caves. These factors are highly likely to shed new light on the way a cave was used (Vignato 2010, p. 132). In District Six important information about original function of the cave can also be garnered from the analysis of another over looked factor, the soot. In Qizil, a significant number of



caves are covered with soot; the surface of some caves is darkened to such an extent that the paintings are almost unidentifiable. A thorough survey of the site reveals the presence of different kinds of soot: thick and dry soot produced by the burning of combustible material in the fireplace is usually found in monastic cells; oily and sticky soot produced by devotional lamps is found in decorated caves; and finally thin dry soot resulting from occasional fires belongs to a post-monastic period.

In District Six, some caves are covered with soot; I leave aside the monastic cells which are covered with the thick dry soot described above and consider the painted caves. Walls and ceiling of the main chamber of Cave 117 are covered with thick strata of oily soot which almost entirely obscures the paintings. As previously mentioned, Cave 117 presents three layers of painting. A closer scrutiny reveals that the soot covers only the top layer of the paintings, but there is no soot in the lower ones. The ante-chamber has no traces of soot. These observations suggest that the practice of burning a devotional lamp in the main chamber, possibly in front of the statue set on the altar only occurred in the late monastic period, after the final repainting.

Cave 114, the only central pillar cave in District Six, is a beautifully decorated cave whose paintings are blackened by heavy soot which is particularly thick on the ceiling. The fact that the soot layer in this cave is not as thick here as in Cave 117 does not necessarily implies a shorter period of usage, but may be due to other factors, such as the larger size of this cave, or the air flow caused by the corridors which could have dispersed the soot. In this case the devotional lamp was likely placed in front of the statue in the main niche, used for a prolonged period of time. Notice that Caves 117 and 114 were the only two caves with statuary in District Six.

These are the only painted caves in District Six that retain traces of soot. Cave 110 and 118, and to a lesser extent the poorly preserved Cave 116, display vivid colours with no trace of soot. The fact that devotional lamps were lit painted caves with statues, while in others this practice was not followed, suggests that different rituals took place in the caves.

Other meaningful data can be inferred from the fact that Cave 119[2] - a lecture hall resulting from the merging of two earlier smaller caves - was frequently restored. Up to five successive layers of plaster were applied to its walls, each one covered by numerous coats of whitewash, as if the cave underwent regular maintenance. This suggests a prolonged usage which required frequent upkeep. This type of maintenance was not undertaken in the other caves, the lack of décor negates the possibility that it was required in order to fulfil this cave's specific function.

The data emerging from fieldwork and the study of elements present in the caves - intentional or unintentional - do not offer a final assessment of the development of the district and the use of its caves. They suggest, however, that the development here was not a linear and straightforward

process. In terms of this process, here are a few concrete facts. Firstly, the group comprising central pillar Cave 114 and monastic cell Cave 115 was expanded by adding a second monastic cell and a few meditation cells, reached by means of through an appositely carved inner stairway. Secondly, Cave 117 was painted and repainted three times. This repainting was not just a restoration of the existing images, but actually saw the introduction of new themes. Thirdly, the lecture hall Cave 119[2] was a late addition to the district that called for the merging of two smaller caves. Cave 119 was transformed into a lecture hall because at the time, this new cave type was deemed essential to the day-to-day function of the district. From this it can be ascertained that there was more than one factor which influenced the construction of the monastery. These clearly went through different phases over time.

Caves 114, 117 and 119 all shows signs of continuous use and/or restoration and were therefore significant to the function of the district. In Cave 114 which was the ritual centre of a group, expanded over time, a lamp appears to have burned continuously in front of the Buddha image. Cave 117 was certainly an important cultic cave, changes to the content of the paintings were likely due to doctrinal changes. Following the final renovation of the paintings a lamp set on the altar in front of the main statue set on top of a central altar. Finally Cave 119 was an unpainted cave intensively used and saw regular upkeep. It is clear that these three caves were the lynch-pins of ritual and communal activity in District Six.

### 3.2 Monastic Cells: Who Lived in Them?

Since most of the published photographic material and the research focuses on the decorated caves, there is a common misperception within the scholastic community as to the component factors of the rock monasteries of Kuča. Few of the art historians who study the caves of Kuča are willing to accept that there were more monastic cells than central pillar caves in Qizil. This is not a matter of conjecture, but of straightforward calculation. In approaching the analysis of the site without consideration for any of the undecorated caves such as monastic cells, meditation cells and deposit caves, several preposterous theories have been suggested concerning the nature of the site. For instance, it has been suggested that the art was designed for the enjoyment of noble patrons and the populace. This overlooks the monks and the fact that there were a considerable number of them living in the rock monasteries of Kuča. The percentage of monastic cells in District Six is quite low, with only three monastic cells of the typical Kuclean type (Caves 112, 115 and 121), while Cave 111, an exceptional type seen only once in Kuča, might be a special form of monastic cave. The number of monks cannot be clearly ascertained, but it

can be safely assumed that the resident monastic population of this district was not very large.

Although, as mentioned above, Cave 121 was a typical Qizil monastic cell, it may have had a special function, since it overlooked the only entrance to the district. It formed a small group with meditation cell Cave 121. Caves 112 and 115 were two monastic cells in a same group. Cave 115 formed the original group together with Caves 114. A likely increase of the monastic population can be the reason of the expansion of the main chamber of Cave 115, and of the subsequent construction of Cave 112 at an upper level. It is interesting to note that groups comprising caves carved at different levels in Qizil are rare; the only other known instance is the group formed by square Cave 12, central pillar Cave 13, monastic cell Cave 24 and meditation cells Caves 25, 25A, 25B and 25C – as well as a two other meditation cells west of Cave 12. Both groups, in other words, had a ritual centre as well as living and meditation places. The interesting fact is that in the side corridors of both central pillar caves – Caves 13 and 114 – are painted processions of nuns (Fig. 14).



Figure 14. Qizil cave 13, outer wall of the right corridor. The fact that all figures have a long right sleeve suggests they were nuns. (Photograph: © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst/Photograph)

The identification of nuns is based on the fact that they wear a long sleeve covering their right arm and shoulder, differently from the monks whose arm and shoulder were bare. Moreover, in both cases the monastic cells are relatively isolated from the other caves, as if to ensure a higher degree of privacy. It is possible that a small community of nuns resided in these two groups. Chinese sources record the fact that noblewomen from the kingdoms around the Taklamakan were sent to Kuča to receive some Buddhist training (Takakusu, Watanabe 1924-1934, vol. 55, no. 2145); could they be hosted in these caves? This argument could even be taken further to suggest that the whole of District Six was occupied by nuns.

### 3.3 Meditation Cells and Meditation

If the interpretation of the typology of caves offered in this paper is correct, then meditation cells most common cave type in District Six. In the westernmost section of this district there was a concentration of meditation cells of different types, the remaining ones being five individual cells and a cave for communal meditation. Three larger caves, suitable for overnight residence were part of this group which was accessed via the stairway Cave 113, while another small cave for individual meditation is visible in the upper reaches of the cliff. Cave 119A is a monastic cell consisting of a narrow chamber with four lateral niches carved on its main and side walls. Lastly, Cave 120 was a cell suitable for overnight residence carved in a high position on the cliff, next to cave 121. All four types of meditation cells known in Kuča are found in this district. They include individual cells carved in isolation or in a row, larger cells for prolonged periods of meditation, tunnel-shaped caves with cells carved off their side walls, and tunnel-shaped caves without cells carved along their sides (Howard, Vignato 2015, pp. 87-97).

From the above it can be seen that more than a score of monks/nuns could meditate at the same time in the meditation cells of District Six. Although this number is not impressively large, it is significant for such a small district, with only three monastic cells. This would indicate that one of the primary functions of this district was meditation.

### 3.4 Conclusion

This concise presentation of District Six only serves to provide the briefest of insights into the inner workings in District Six, one of the smallest and most complex districts in Qizil. A full accounting of all relevant features would likely require several volumes. In addition to a summary presentation of the caves, this paper serves to highlight a number of often understudied issues, such as connective architecture, repairs, a few issues related to caves devoted to worship, and also a preliminary interpretation of the function of the caves. Since monks (perhaps nuns) lived, worshipped and meditated in these few caves, District Six can be regarded as a sample of a typical monastery in Kuča.

Finally, the study and interpretation of rock monasteries cannot depend solely on elements of iconography and style of the cave wall paintings. Wall paintings must not be separated from the framework in which they were created, nor can we ignore their location within the cave, or the general context in which the cave was carved. In short, these cave wall paintings are not paintings hanging on the walls, but a strongly contextualized type of immovable art.

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## Scintille nel buio Metafore della luce nella poesia *menglong*

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**Abstract** Modern and contemporary Chinese poetry often shows predilection for images of light and its sources. In many cases these images are clear metaphors of the poet and his/her art. Drawing from the original texts of a number of *menglong* poets, some interpretative suggestions concerning the use of these images will be provided with the help of selected critical readings. The aim is to try to demonstrate how these images of light convey an ideal of poetry as pure and aloof from worldliness, and emphasise the poet's commitment to his/her art and to mankind. The analysis of these metaphors will lead to a more general reflection on the guiding and redeeming role of poetry, and on the renewal of poetic diction in the period immediately following the Cultural Revolution.

**Keywords** Menglong. Light. Poetry.

«Mais la Chine obscurcit», dites-vous; et je répons:  
«La Chine obscurcit, mais il y a clarté à trouver; cherchez-la.»  
(Pascal [1669] 1982, p. 286)

Questo articolo prende avvio da una constatazione empirica: la presenza quasi immancabile di termini e immagini legati alle tenebre, alla luce e alle sorgenti luminose nella poesia cinese moderna, e in particolare nella poesia della Seconda Generazione, meglio nota come *menglongshi* 朦胧诗, la 'poesia oscura'. Il termine *menglongshi*, reso variamente come 'poesia oscura' (nel senso di 'vago', 'indistinto'), '*misty poetry*' in inglese o '*poésie floue*' in francese, è in realtà estremamente polisemico ed evocativo, poiché racchiude in sé un ampio spettro di sfumature. John Minford (1983, p. 182) rende conto della ricchezza semantica del termine, originariamente

«Scintille nel buio» è una voluta citazione del titolo dato da Li Tche-Houa, Pénélope Bourgeois e Jacqueline Alézaïs alla traduzione francese del romanzo di Dai Houying *Ren a, ren!* (人啊, 人!, 1980): *Étincelles dans les ténèbres* (1987).

Laddove non diversamente specificato le traduzioni in italiano delle opere e delle citazioni sono dell'Autore; quelli indicati fra parentesi dopo le poesie sono i volumi da cui sono tratti i testi originali.

coniato con intento spregiativo dai critici cinesi più conservatori per sminuire questa corrente poetica:

[it] evokes a series of complex images – the moon about to go behind a cloud, a landscape seen through snow or drizzle [...] suggest[s] something concealed, a veiled prospect, a hidden light or a half-light, the sun about to rise, a meaning opaquely hinted at, a focus blurred, a state between dreaming and waking, a ‘fuzzy’ spectrum of values in place of a clearcut bipolarity. In the mist there is a hint of mystery, even mysticism.

La poesia contemporanea cinese, dal 1949 agli anni Novanta, si divide solitamente in tre generazioni: la Prima Generazione è quella dei poeti, in alcuni casi già attivi nel campo della poesia di sinistra prima del 1949, ma che diventano i cantori della nuova Repubblica Popolare Cinese dagli anni Cinquanta. La Seconda Generazione è quella uscita dalla Rivoluzione Culturale, composta da poeti più maturi (che quindi avevano già iniziato la propria formazione e la propria produzione clandestina durante la Rivoluzione Culturale, come Bei Dao 北岛 o Mang Ke 芒克) e poeti più giovani, unitisi ai primi tra la fine degli anni Settanta e gli anni Ottanta (ad esempio Gu Cheng 顾城). Inizialmente riuniti attorno alla rivista *Jintian* 今天 (Oggi) (1978-1980), i maggiori poeti di questa generazione saranno conosciuti collettivamente come poeti *menglong*. La Terza Generazione sarà quella successiva, formata da giovani, per lo più studenti universitari, formati in una temperie culturale molto più aperta alle influenze della letteratura e della filosofia provenienti dall'estero: questi poeti potranno contare su una formazione più completa e fin dai primi anni Ottanta contesteranno la poesia *menglong*, a sua volta divenuta già classica. Essi saranno i fautori di una nuova ondata poetica a partire dalla metà degli anni Ottanta, quando lo slancio e la novità della poesia oscura inizieranno a scemare. Caratteristica saliente della Terza Generazione sarà poi di essere divisa in numerose scuole o raggruppamenti poetici, con una gran varietà di riviste e pubblicazioni.

Posta a metà tra la Prima Generazione, quella dei poeti ‘ritornati’ o ‘riemergenti’,<sup>1</sup> e la generazione dei più giovani poeti della Terza Generazione, la poesia *menglong* si caratterizza nello stile per una maggior densità e profondità delle immagini e dei simboli utilizzati rispetto alla lirica successiva, più concreta e perfino volutamente ‘prosaica’, in cui «le stelle sono stelle» (*Mankaituo* 曼凯托 [Mankato] di Lü De'an 吕德安 [Zhang, Chen 2007,

<sup>1</sup> Un'altra etichetta per i poeti della Prima Generazione: perseguitati e ostracizzati durante la Campagna contro la destra (1957) e la Rivoluzione Culturale (1966-1976), alla fine degli anni Settanta furono riabilitati e poterono tornare a scrivere. Fra questi il più importante è sicuramente Ai Qing 艾青 (1910-1996), a cui si deve la definizione di ‘poeti ritornati’, tratta dalla critica da una sua raccolta del 1980, *Guilai zhi ge* 归来的歌 (Le canzoni del ritorno).

pp. 166-167]). Sarà soprattutto un poeta della Terza Generazione, Yu Jian 于坚, a realizzare la 'oggettivazione' della lingua poetica e delle immagini poetiche, lasciando spazio nella poesia al quotidiano e al triviale e smitizzando, insieme a Xi Chuan 西川 (Liu Jun 刘军), la figura del poeta e la stessa creazione poetica (Van Crevel 2005). In particolare, questo procedimento di 'oggettivazione' viene definito da Van Crevel (2008, p. 28) come «la presentazione di realtà umane di tutti i giorni come rimosse dalla percezione e dall'interpretazione abituale, e un'attenzione immaginifica per oggetti (inanimati)» o, più precisamente: «la presentazione dell'esperienza umana come rimossa da una percezione e un'interpretazione socialmente determinata, convenzionale e abituale» (Van Crevel 2008, p. 253). Questa oggettivazione, è infatti corretta e completata da una personificazione degli oggetti inanimati che li rende soggetti interessanti in sé, senza che debbano per forza rinviare ad una realtà diversa, più ampia o con riferimenti più profondi e impegnativi. Si può infatti avvertire un passaggio evidente dopo il Quattro Giugno 1989 da una poesia ispirata ancora a nobili ideali e a 'grandi narrative' dell'epoca moderna a una poesia molto più privata e intima, quando non apertamente scettica e cinica negli anni Novanta, che contribuì alla crisi di identità che aveva afflitto i poeti cinesi per tutto il Novecento (Yeh 1991) portandoli ad esaltare la propria identità di martiri e di profeti inascoltati in un'epoca di soddisfatta mediocrità. La poesia si allontana sempre più dai temi politici, sia per la disillusione degli autori, sia per la diffidenza delle autorità per ogni tema politicamente sensibile. Questi passaggi linguistici e tematici sono riassunti da Van Crevel (2005, p. 128) in questi termini: «da una *pre*-scrizione totalitaria di forme e contenuti obbligatori alla *pro*-scrizione autoritaria del dissenso»; inoltre la tendenza verso una poesia tematicamente e linguisticamente più prosaica e - per quel che riguarda il tema di questo articolo - meno metaforica o allusiva, viene dallo stesso autore concentrata nelle due dicotomie evolutive «dall'elevato al terreno» e «dal cosa al come» (Van Crevel 2005, p. 129). La prima delle due opposizioni riguarda proprio l'abbandono di temi intellettuali, elevati e universali in favore di argomenti tratti dalla vita quotidiana, trattati in termini colloquiali e molto terreni; la seconda dicotomia indica un'evoluzione da argomenti di cui era relativamente facile rintracciare il riferimento storico a temi molto più personali e da una lingua che permetteva di riconoscere tali riferimenti ad uno stile molto più sperimentale nella forma ma sicuramente meno esclusivo nei contenuti.<sup>2</sup> Si può anche immaginare che questa rivolta anti simbolista dei nuovi poeti

2 «while basic knowledge of recent Chinese history is indispensable for reading the earliest contemporary poems - especially the best-known specimens of Obscure poetry (*men-glong shi*) - it is no longer so for many works from later years. Often, China is simply not there. When it *is* there, [...] its manifestations tend to be explicit, eliminating the need for the reader to supply plausible interpretations» (Van Crevel 2005, pp. 125-126).



dipenda in una certa misura anche dalla funzione e dal valore cognitivo della metafora stessa: in quanto forma di conoscenza nuova e illuminante essa è un mezzo a disposizione del poeta nella sua missione didattica: serve cioè al poeta per far scorgere il legame fra realtà apparentemente lontane e irrelate. Per i poeti delle generazioni successive alla poesia oscura il poeta non è più investito di alcuna missione storica e sociale e quindi non ha più il compito di svelare misteri o denunciare l'indicibile.

La pretesa oscurità e difficoltà delle immagini della poesia *menglong* in realtà si può considerare piuttosto come il ritorno ad un linguaggio fortemente soggettivo, dopo l'eccessiva esplicitazione tematica e linguistica della poesia della generazione precedente. Quest'ultima, in nome dell'immediata comprensibilità imposta dalle norme letterarie del realismo socialista, prevedeva un'interpretazione univoca e rassicurante delle immagini e dei simboli usati, sia sulla base di un'ermeneutica autoritariamente imposta dall'alto o di abitudini consolidate nella fruizione poetica popolare. La visione della realtà veicolata dalla poesia del periodo maoista è quella di un 'realismo idealista', romanticamente votata alla costruzione di quel che la realtà dovrebbe essere, più che di ciò che essa è. L'oscurità quindi era del tutto bandita, sia nell'espressione, evitando immagini troppo complicate, che parlano solo all'autore e ai suoi pochi interpreti, sia nelle immagini usate, molto spesso legate alla luce solare e alla speranza di un mondo nuovo.

Non a caso le prime testimonianze di una poesia eretica rispetto alle norme prodotte dall'integrazione di realismo socialista e del romanticismo rivoluzionario, sua ultima fase, si avranno in clandestinità durante la Rivoluzione Culturale, quando il *Baiyangdian shiqun* 白洋淀诗群 (Gruppo poetico delle paludi di Baiyang, che annovera i già ricordati Bei Dao e Mang Ke) inizierà a mettere in discussione le verità poetiche dominanti e a comporre una poesia di introspezione, cercando anche nuovi mezzi espressivi per rendere il senso di spavento, di spaesamento e di esilio - fisico e spirituale - di una giovinezza delusa e sacrificata per gli esperimenti politici ed economici del maoismo. Il Gruppo poetico delle paludi di Baiyang sarà proprio il primo nucleo di coloro che saranno poi noti come 'poeti oscuri' (Hong, Liu 2005).

Questa poesia di introspezione, inoltre, intrattiene con la lingua un rapporto conflittuale: se da un lato si cercano nuove strade e si tenta un radicale rinnovamento della tradizione poetica nella forma, nei fatti la lingua usata da questi poeti è ancora molto legata al *Mao wenti* 毛文体 (lo 'stile Mao') del recente passato, così come in essi sopravviveva l'idea per cui il poeta dovesse essere l'araldo della propria epoca e farsi carico di grandi responsabilità sociali, politiche e culturali. Il poeta *menglong* concepiva sì la propria opera come missione sociale e intellettuale per i propri simili, ma non più solo in termini politici: egli era ispirato piuttosto da un più vasto umanesimo (*rendao* 人道) e da una nuova coscienza che potesse arginare

gli effetti dell'alienazione (*yihua* 异化), vissuta nell'epoca precedente e sempre più percepita anche nella Cina delle riforme.

Per quanto riguarda i termini e le immagini poetiche riconducibili all'area semantica della luce, nella poesia cinese classica, e in particolare in quella di epoca Tang, il topos più frequente e più noto è sicuramente quello della luce lunare, mentre nella poesia del periodo maoista la fonte di luce più ricorrente è il sole, simbolo dell'avvenire socialista e in particolare di Mao. Il simbolo della stella compare spesso nella poesia moderna, anche per marcare una decisa distanza non solo dalla poesia classica, la cui immagine poetica prediletta era la luna, ma anche dai primi esperimenti di 'nuova poesia'. Hu Shi 胡适, considerato il primo poeta del Quattro Maggio, già fa uso dell'immagine della stella, anche metaforicamente (Yeh 1991); tuttavia, i primi autori a utilizzare quest'immagine estesamente e con un significato più profondo saranno Bing Xin 冰心, Wen Yiduo 闻一多 e Xu Zhimo 徐志摩. In particolare, lo sguardo di Xu Zhimo - per quanto miope, e anzi proprio perché miope - era spesso rivolto al cielo, anche se poi tornava sempre sulla terra, al mondo degli uomini: «La stella, associata alla fermezza, alla permanenza, e a qualcosa al di là di un mondo fatto di flusso e mutamento, divenne in Hsü [Xu] un simbolo frequente dell'aspirazione dell'uomo all'Assoluto» (Lin 1972, p. 125). Influenzato dalla poesia romantica inglese, egli sicuramente riprese il tema del firmamento dalla tensione alla trascendenza e al sublime dell'idealismo romantico. Il simbolo della stella compare con estrema evidenza in due liriche dell'autore, *Wei yao xun yi ge mingxing* 为要寻一个明星 (Cercando una stella brillante, 1925) e *Wo you yi ge lian'ai* 我有一个恋爱 (Ho un amore, 1925?);<sup>3</sup> la notte, contestualmente, rappresenta invece lo stato di solitudine, di incertezza, di smarrimento del poeta nella sua ricerca di un ideale di bellezza costante e imperituro. Lo stesso tormento notturno agitava anche He Qifang 何其芳 nel comporre le sue *Yege* 夜歌 (Canzoni notturne, 1945) durante il difficile apprendistato come poeta rivoluzionario a Yan'an.

La stella come simbolo dell'assoluto e della trascendenza per una poetessa *menglong*, Shu Ting 舒婷 in *Liushuixian* 流水线 (Catena di montaggio) smette di essere fonte di speranza di fronte alla deprimente realtà della catena di montaggio: usciti a notte dalla fabbrica gli operai vedono il firmamento ma, dopo aver paragonato la loro situazione a quella della stelle, costrette anch'esse ad un moto sempre uguale e ad un pulsare sempre identico come il ritmo della produzione seriale, la poetessa sente che le stelle e gli alberi con cui prima si sentiva in comunione non possono fare nulla per alleviare l'alienazione che la assale: «我惟独不能感觉到 | 我自己的存在 | 仿佛丛树与星群 | 或者由于习惯 | 或者由于悲哀 | 对本身已成的定局 | 再没有

3 Il testo originale delle due liriche è presente in <http://www.shigeku.org> (2016-05-26) mentre per una traduzione inglese si vedano Hsu (1963, p. 86) e Lin (1972, pp. 124-126).

力量关怀» «La sola cosa che non riesco a sentire | è la mia stessa esistenza | come gli alberi e le stelle | forse per abitudine | forse per tristezza | non ho più la forza di mostrare sollecitudine | per uno stato che non posso cambiare» (Shu Ting 1994, pp. 32-33).<sup>4</sup>

Anche nei poeti simbolisti sono visibili corrispondenze, suggestioni, immagini, associazioni concettuali e simboli che rivelano il mistero e la bellezza della vita anche attraverso un linguaggio allusivo e sperimentale fatto di sinestesie e di effetti musicali. L'ispirazione di questi poeti non viene solo dai poeti occidentali ma anche da poeti 'oscuri' ante litteram della tradizione cinese, ad esempio i due poeti di epoca Tang (618-907) Li Shangyin 李商隐 e Li He 李贺. Anche in poeti come Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 la sera è il momento della riflessione e dell'introspezione, ad esempio in *Xiyang xia* 夕阳下 (Al crepuscolo, 1927).<sup>5</sup>

Fan Xing (2012), ricorda come la bellezza della poesia classica, ispirata dall'immagine della luna, avesse una natura essenzialmente femminile, *yin* 阴, piuttosto che maschile, *yang* 阳. Il principale simbolo associato per analogia all'elemento maschile, fin dallo *Yijing* 易经 (Classico dei Mutamenti), è il sole, che nella letteratura moderna emergerà a partire dagli anni Trenta nella poesia politica. Di questa, uno dei principali autori sarà Ai Qing 艾青. Inizialmente influenzato dal simbolismo francese, Ai Qing darà vigore alle proprie poesie proprio con metafore e simboli rappresentativi di realtà ben più vaste; egli sarà il principale poeta comunista degli anni Quaranta dopo aver riformato il proprio stile negli anni di Yan'an accogliendo temi, ritmi e vocabolario della tradizione folk<sup>6</sup> e più di ogni altro poeta della sua generazione saprà introdurre l'immagine del sole nella poesia moderna cinese. In particolare nella raccolta *Xiang taiyang* 向日葵 (Verso il sole, 1940), in cui sottolinea il distacco dalle tenebre del passato e guarda con grande fiducia e speranza al futuro, quando Ai Qing parla del sole, prima fonte di luce e simbolo di un grande ottimismo per il cambiamento, soprattutto all'alba, lo associa alla libertà politica e alla rivoluzione, nonostante

4 In questo caso predilige questa interpretazione del verso, simile a quella data da Michelle Yeh (1992a, p. 186), in base a quanto affermato nella prima porzione della poesia, in cui le stelle sono descritte come stanche dopo millenni di un moto sempre identico e gli alberi coperti di fumo e polvere: come le stelle e gli alberi ormai, anche la protagonista della poesia non riesce più a curarsi del proprio stato, è per lei una situazione naturale. Questa traduzione, quindi, è da preferire a quella fornita in Shu Ting (1994, p. 33) che invece traduce questi versi come: «The only thing I do not feel | Is my own existence | As though the woods and stars | Maybe out of habit | Maybe out of sorrow | No longer have the strength to care | About a destiny they cannot alter».

5 Il testo originale della poesia si può trovare in <http://www.shigeku.org> (2016-05-26); per una traduzione inglese si veda Lin (1972, p. 167).

6 Lo stesso autore, però, ammise i limiti della sua produzione fra il 1942 e il 1945, fatta soprattutto di esercizi di revisione del proprio stile nella direzione del realismo rivoluzionario imposto nel 1942 (Lin 1972, p. 187).

la difficile situazione della Cina all'epoca (Hung 1989a). Anche nella sua raccolta *Liming de tongzhi* 黎明的通知 (L'annuncio dell'alba, 1943) il sole è spesso associato alla forza vitale e all'energia collettiva concentrata nelle città: lo scopo del poeta era di suscitare il patriottismo dei suoi connazionali per la liberazione della Cina dall'invasione straniera (Hung 1989b).

Nel nuovo governo instaurato dal 1949 le luci naturali vengono perfino oscurate dal progresso tecnologico garantito dal nuovo regime e allora nelle canzoni delle comuni agricole finalmente raggiunte dall'energia elettrica si giunge a dire «Stars are not as bright as the electric light | That brightens every man's heart» (citato in Lin 1972, pp. 244-245).

Inoltre, la poesia lirico-politica (*zhengzhi shuqing shi* 政治抒情诗) di autori come Guo Xiaochuan 郭小川 e He Jingzhi 贺敬之 faceva largo uso di pensieri e concetti astratti presi dalla realtà politica del momento espressi attraverso un linguaggio figurato le cui forme diventano pian piano a loro volta simboli astratti (Hong 2009). È da notare però come proprio una delle poesie di Guo Xiaochuan più criticate per le emozioni 'decadenti e nichiliste' che esprime, ossia *Wang xingkong* 望星空 (Guardando il cielo stellato, 1959)<sup>7</sup> riguarda proprio una fonte luminosa per certi versi ormai estranea al catalogo delle immagini poetiche ammesse. In questa lunga poesia narrativa il poeta mette a confronto la propria difficile esperienza individuale e la propria finitezza con la serenità della notte stellata e la vastità del firmamento. Forse questo ai critici dell'epoca ricordava troppo il sentimentalismo individualista della poesia di Bing Xin 冰心 negli anni Venti.

Possiamo anche ricordare, fra le liriche di He Jingzhi, l'inno alla nuova Cina *Weida zuguo* 伟大祖国 (La grande patria, 1964)<sup>8</sup> in cui il simbolo del sole rosso che sorge ad est si combina con altre immagini grandiose tratte dal paesaggio naturale cinese per simboleggiare lo spirito eroico e la fiducia in un radioso futuro sotto la guida di Mao e del Partito (Hsu, Wang 1980, pp. 672-673). In effetti, come ricorda Yu Qian (2010) anche nel periodo dei 'diciassette anni' fra il 1949 e il 1966 il simbolo dominante nella poesia e nella creazione artistica è il sole, simbolo politico della speranza di rinascita della Cina, nato nel periodo moderno (1919-1949) con le liriche di autori quali Ai Qing e Guo Moruo 郭沫若. In quanto prima fonte luminosa per tutta l'umanità, esso rappresenta la permanenza e la stabilità anche in tempi molto turbolenti ed è la sorgente della sopravvivenza per ogni essere vivente. Per i poeti esso è il simbolo della forza, della pienezza, della vita e della sacralità; inoltre, il sole scaccia le tenebre e indica perciò la vittoria della giustizia (Yu Qian 2010). Anche per questo col tempo il sole finì coll'essere associato non più solamente alla nascita di una nuova era

7 Il testo originale della poesia si può trovare in <http://www.shigeku.org> (2016-05-26); per una traduzione inglese si veda Hsu, Wang (1980, pp. 541-543).

8 Una traduzione inglese di questa poesia è presente in Hsu, Wang (1980, pp. 672-673).

ma, all'interno del culto della persona del leader, direttamente alla figura di Mao Zedong.<sup>9</sup> La natura dell'immagine poetica (*yixiang* 意象) è anch'essa molto più trasparente: raramente viene usata per rafforzare la profondità della metafora (*yinyu* 隐喻) o del simbolo (*xiangzheng* 象征); l'astrattezza viene evitata in nome di una marcata concretezza delle descrizioni, che unisce direttamente significante e referente concreto. Per lo stesso motivo, tutto ciò che potrebbe passare per 'astruso' (*huise* 晦涩) od 'oscuro' (*menglong* 朦胧) viene considerato 'decadente' e 'individualista'.

In forma volutamente polemica con la tradizione e con il recente passato maoista, segnatamente della Rivoluzione Culturale, la poesia contemporanea fiorita durante il successivo periodo *xin shiqi* 新时期 (Nuova era), utilizzò piuttosto immagini legate a luci molto più fioche e crepuscolari, quali l'alba, il tramonto, le stelle, le meteore e le comete, la candela, la lampada, la lampadina, le lucciole, riprendendo in questo la tradizione poetica moderna interrotta dall'avvento del realismo socialista (*shehui xianshizhuyi* 社会现实主义) e del successivo romanticismo rivoluzionario (*geming langmanzhuyi* 革命浪漫主义).

Tuttavia, pur rappresentando un ponte fra la poesia moderna (per temi, immagini, sensibilità del poeta) molto della poesia del periodo maoista venne conservato nella nuova poesia: il verso libero senza rime, l'alternanza di versi lunghi e corti, le cesure e l'assenza di punteggiatura era già propria della poesia di Ai Qing, come anche il montaggio di immagini senza una sequenza lineare ma in base alle emozioni, la libertà formale e l'andamento narrativo di molte composizioni, oltre al verso fortemente ritmato di Tian Jian 田间, senza contare il perdurare dell'ideale del poeta come portavoce della propria epoca. Comunque, sembra di tornare al passato anche perché la poesia appare nuovamente piuttosto intellettualistica, individualista, elitaria e scettica nei confronti del futuro e intenta a rimuginare sul passato (forse anche per questo immagini molto presenti sono il crepuscolo e l'autunno). Essa non canta più la gloria della patria o le vicende di contadini-operai-soldati ma si concentra sui sentimenti e i pensieri dei poeti e di chi, come loro, aveva sperimentato le stesse sofferenze.

Per avanzare alcune ipotesi interpretative di un ambito semantico particolarmente produttivo nella poesia cinese contemporanea e per analizzare i referenti metaforici delle immagini utilizzate sarà utile ricorrere alla tripartizione analitica postulata da Maghiel Van Crevel (2008) fra testo, contesto (la realtà storica) e metatesto (il discorso sulla poesia). Il metatesto, presente nelle liriche stesse, permette di capire la posizione e la riflessione dei poeti nei confronti della poesia e del suo posto nella

9 Julia Lin riporta una poesia folk dello Shandong del 1958 nella quale i contadini, colmi di gratitudine per la loro nuova situazione, dicono di avere ormai due soli: uno risiede a Pechino (Mao) e l'altro in cielo: il sole in cielo scalda i loro corpi, il sole a Pechino scalda i loro cuori (Lin 1972, pp. 243-244).

Cina contemporanea, come anche della lingua cinese e del suo uso politico nella storia cinese; l'esame del contesto, invece, aiuta a fare luce sul significato storico e sul valore allegorico attribuito alla luce e all'oscurità nelle composizioni poetiche. Gli indirizzi interpretativi principali per rendere conto dell'amplissimo uso delle immagini dell'oscurità e della luce, sono quello tematico relativo alla sacralità della poesia e della figura del poeta, avanzata da Michelle Yeh (1991; 1996) e quello retorico, che si concentra invece sull'uso di una lingua poetica totalmente rinnovata.

Michelle Yeh (1991) ha dedicato un'ampia riflessione alla simbologia delle stelle, delle comete, delle meteore nella poesia cinese moderna, con particolare riferimento al 'culto della poesia' e alla figura del poeta come sacerdote e profeta di questo culto. Intendo qui riprendere e sviluppare questa riflessione prendendo in particolare in esame la poesia *menglong* e la sua forte carica metaforica. Vorrei concentrarmi non solo sull'immagine delle stelle ma anche su altre fonti luminose, come il sole, e la loro riformulazione nell'ambito della più generale discussione sulla lingua e sulla simbologia del recente passato maoista. Prenderò in considerazione anche il dibattito sulla metafora nella poesia cinese e infine proporrò alcune interpretazioni per le immagini più ricorrenti fra i poeti della Seconda Generazione che sono legate alla luce e alle fonti luminose. Potranno forse esserci sovrainterpretazioni ma ciò si può in parte giustificare con l'estremo soggettivismo della poesia *menglong*: essa infatti rifiuta programmaticamente la funzione comunicativa della lingua e restringe la comprensibilità delle immagini alla sensibilità personale dell'autore, lasciando al lettore l'onere di interpretarle secondo conoscenze ed esperienze condivise da un'intera generazione.<sup>10</sup> Quella della poesia oscura fu l'ultima 'stagione metaforica' della poesia contemporanea, prima dell'avvento di una poesia più concreta e volutamente antisublime quale quella della Terza Generazione, lontana ormai dalla dialettica di luce e ombra di cui i suoi predecessori erano ancora eredi.

La lingua della nuova poesia non è più un mezzo di comunicazione semplice e comprensibile ma uno strumento per la creazione di verità, una verità poetica più profonda e attendibile di una verità razionale e positiva; la poesia e la sua lingua rappresentano in questo momento storico il riscatto della verità soggettiva. In questo modo la luce, la sua assenza e le sue sfumature possono essere lette – là dove legittimamente possibile – come la possibilità di capire la realtà, di esprimersi e di illuminare i propri simili. Il punto di partenza, in questo caso, è l'esperienza traumatica della

10 Ricordiamo la domanda che si pone Huang Yibing a proposito dell'interpretazione di una poesia di Duo Duo: «Why, then, do we not admit that there is no pure reading of it, whether politically or aesthetically? Why do not admit that the poem's vocabulary and message are by their very 'nature' bastardized with politicality, thus making attempts to disentangle the various layers impossible and unnecessary?» (Huang 2007, p. 57).

Rivoluzione Culturale, durante la quale la libertà espressiva era negata e la poesia poteva risplendere solo come fiaccola isolata o stella lontana nell'oscurità. Durante la Rivoluzione Culturale tale oscurità rappresentava la negazione della libertà di esprimersi e di comunicare: durante quel periodo i poeti potevano comporre liberamente solo in clandestinità. Tuttavia, questa costrizione fu anche molto produttiva poiché contribuì alla ridefinizione della soggettività poetica attraverso una lingua ben più personale e intima. Con la fine della Rivoluzione Culturale e la conseguente rinascita intellettuale e artistica si riaffermerà un dibattito sulla modernità paragonabile a quello del Quattro Maggio 1919 e che ne sarà per molti aspetti l'erede. Come ha notato Huang Yibing (2007, p. 23) è un «momento di assoluta illuminazione», quello vissuto dal protagonista del *Kuanren riji* 狂人日記, il *Diario di un pazzo* (1918) di Lu Xun 魯迅, a inaugurare la nascita della soggettività moderna nella letteratura cinese.<sup>11</sup>

La poesia cinese contemporanea, oltre a presentarsi volutamente enigmatica, si rivela estremamente metaforica e pienamente moderna nel senso che Roland Barthes dà della scrittura poetica:

sous chaque Mot de la poésie moderne gît une sorte de géologie existentielle, où se rassemble le contenu total du Nom, et non plus son contenu électif comme dans la prose et dans la poésie classiques. Le Mot n'est plus dirigé à l'avance par l'intention générale d'un discours socialisé ; le consommateur de poésie, privé du guide des rapports sélectifs, débouche sur le Mot, frontalement, et le reçoit comme une quantité absolue, accompagnée de tout sens possibles. Le Mot est ici encyclopédique, il contient simultanément toutes les acceptions parmi lesquelles un discours relationnel lui aurait imposé de choisir. (Barthes 1953, pp. 37-38)

L'importanza della parola come 'enciclopedica' sottolinea la centralità della

11 «The moon is bright tonight. I had not seen it for thirty years; the sight of it today was extraordinarily refreshing. Tonight, I realized I have spent the past thirty years or more in a state of dream; but I must still be careful». Questo è l'incipit del *Il diario di un pazzo* (Lu Xun 2009, p. 22). Si può notare anche che l'inizio di ogni capitolo del racconto è segnato da una precisa descrizione della luce: la discesa nella follia infatti è rivelata anche dal passaggio dalla notte illuminata ad un'oscurità in cui giorno e notte si confondono fino ad un giorno dal quale è scomparso il sole. La follia può anche essere semplicemente una forma di razionalità del tutto autoreferenziale ed ermeticamente soggettiva: la stessa 'poesia oscura' infatti apparve agli occhi dei critici incongruente e irrazionale; tuttavia, «[...] bisogna | essere folli per essere chiari.» (Pasolini 1957, pp. 24-28) e, come ricorda anche Elias Canetti (1999, pp. 463-464), «[il pazzo] crede alle illusioni dei suoi sensi, noi diffidiamo dei nostri sensi sani. I pochi credenti fra noi si aggrappano ad esperienze che altri, migliaia di anni or sono, hanno fatto al posto loro. Noi abbiamo bisogno di visioni, di rivelazioni, di voci - fulminei accostamenti alle cose e agli uomini - e se non le troviamo in noi stessi le andiamo a cercare nella tradizione. [...] Noi ce ne stiamo seduti sulla nostra ottusa intelligenza come gli strozzini sul loro denaro. L'intelligenza come la concepiamo noi è un malinteso.»

metafora nella poesia contemporanea: è il contenuto enciclopedico, e non dizionario, della metafora a rendere conto dei passaggi di significato da un significante a un altro: «la riuscita della metafora è funzione del formato socioculturale dell'enciclopedia dei soggetti interpretanti» (Eco 1980, p. 233). Sono quindi molto importanti il contesto socioculturale e il tessuto dei rimandi intertestuali; tuttavia, al di là della sua interpretazione, la metafora è «lo strumento che permette di capire meglio il codice (o l'enciclopedia)» (p. 234) entro il quale si costituisce, poiché essa «interessa come strumento di conoscenza *additiva* e non *sostitutiva*» (p. 192): essa non ha semplice funzione esornativa ma conoscitiva e creativa, sostiene una visione della realtà e arricchisce la lingua di nuovi significati, oltre a rivelare intuizioni inedite. La 'poesia oscura' cinese, infatti, venne bollata come incomprensibile proprio a causa dei suoi accostamenti imprevedibili, di immagini estremamente originali e volutamente inaspettate: la volontà di rinnovare una lingua poetica gravata di norme e abitudini ormai percepite come antiquate e costrittive contribuisce a spiegare la creazione di una poesia apparentemente enigmatica.

Per fare un esempio di metafora ormai consolidata, tanto da essere registrata anche sul dizionario, vediamo che lo *Xiandai Hanyu da cidian* 汉语大词典 (Grande dizionario di cinese moderno) definisce *huanghun* 黄昏 come «日已落而天色尚未黑的时候» (il momento in cui il sole è già sceso ma il cielo non è ancora nero), esso può indicare anche il crepuscolo della vita, ad esempio nell'espressione *huanghun lian* 黄昏恋 (amore crepuscolare, ossia tra persone anziane) ed è un esempio di metafora ormai catacretica, frusta e non inventiva. Anche *liming* 黎明 (l'alba) è un termine definito dallo stesso dizionario in questi termini: «天将明未明的时候。[...] 喻指光明或胜利。」 (il momento in cui il cielo è a metà tra il chiarore e il buio; esso rappresenta metaforicamente la luce o la vittoria). Entrambe le immagini della luce hanno un significato traslato ormai contenuto nella loro definizione dizionariale e quindi il loro uso simbolico per essere inventivo deve riferirsi a realtà differenti. Il contenuto enciclopedico di un termine permette invece maggiori possibilità di associazione originale con altri referenti o concetti: una metafora 'enciclopedica' si fonda quindi su una definizione più complessa, che parte dal contesto extralinguistico e dalle interpretazioni storiche, sociali e culturali di un termine o di un'immagine. Ad esempio, l'immagine del sole assume diverse connotazioni nel corso della storia poetica del Novecento cinese e ciò è ancor più evidente con l'immagine delle stelle, definite 'corpi celesti' o al massimo 'persone notevoli' sul dizionario ma, come abbiamo visto, divengono simboli di una realtà poetica più profonda nelle liriche dei poeti cinesi del Novecento.

Nella poetica tradizionale, e in particolare nel *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙 di Liu Xie 劉勰 (VI secolo d.C.) si stabilisce un confronto fra due procedimenti retorici: il *bi* 比 (paragone), assimilabile alla figura della similitudine e della metafora nella tradizione occidentale e lo *xing* 兴, l'evocazione di un'immagi-



ne o di una realtà dal forte valore simbolico ma la cui comprensione dipende da una nota esplicativa che fornisca una definizione della realtà cui si allude.

*Bi* (paragonare) vuol dire *fu* (accostare), e *xing* vuol dire *qi* (suscitare): accostare idee è servirsi di analogie per indicare situazioni, suscitare emozioni è appoggiarsi all'impalpabile per formulare concetti. Suscitando le emozioni si costruisce la struttura del *xing*, accostando le idee nasce la forma del paragone. [In origine] un paragone esprimeva riprovazione [provocata da] una incontenibile ira, il *xing* esortava attraverso indiretti confronti. [...] Che cosa significa veramente 'paragone'? Scrivere cose che evocano idee, con parole alate saper cogliere l'essenza dei fatti. (Lavagnino 1995, p. 242)

La funzione principale dei due procedimenti per Liu Xie è essenzialmente morale e didattica; nonostante le differenze (il *bi* come esercizio retorico e lo *xing* come stimolo intellettuale) entrambi concorrono a creare un parallelo fra il mondo naturale e quello umano, a sua volta inevitabilmente parte di quello naturale, ma sempre passando attraverso un canale sovrasensibile che è l'intelletto. L'unione dei due procedimenti si trova al livello della creazione stessa, come espressione della capacità di cogliere le associazioni fra elementi differenti e in una certa misura - tralasciando il fatto che si sia variamente identificato il *bi* come metafora, similitudine, analogia, e lo *xing* come metonimia - possiamo rintracciare caratteristiche della metafora come intesa nella retorica e nella poetica occidentale in entrambi i procedimenti: l'accostamento del *bi* e il contenuto didattico dello *xing* concorrono a ricreare nella poesia moderna una nuova forma di conoscenza, conservando in larga misura questi due strumenti della poesia classica. Se in quest'ultima le analogie non erano mai innovative (Yu 1981) perché preesistono alla scoperta da parte del poeta, nel corso del Novecento molto della poesia occidentale, in primis quella romantica e simbolista, viene assorbito nella nuova tradizione letteraria cinese.

Nella poetica tradizionale, inoltre, si dava molta importanza alla qualità suggestiva della poesia, più che alla descrizione esplicita delle immagini: questa qualità viene indicata con il termine *yin* 隱 (nascosto) (Skerratt 2013), lo stesso che troviamo nel termine usato spesso per indicare nel cinese moderno la metafora: *yinyu* 隱喻, definito dallo *Xiandai Hanyu da cidian* anche come «*yan wai zhi yi*» «言外之意» (significato oltre [il senso letterale del]la parola). Bokenkamp (1989) ricorda altri termini usati tradizionalmente nella poetica cinese per riferirsi alla metafora e alla similitudine, oggi indicate insieme con il termine *bi* 比 o *biyu* 比喻, ossia *ming biyu* 明比喻 ('paragone evidente', il termine che indica la similitudine); mentre per la metafora si usava *an biyu* 暗比喻 (paragone oscuro): i termini più moderni per questa stessa distinzione sono *xianyu* 显喻 e *yinyu* 隱喻. Michelle Yeh (1987) ricorda invece come, fin dallo *Yijing* è il termine *bi* ad essere associato a ciò che

intendiamo come metafora e analogia. La scelta dei termini oggi dipende soprattutto dal dibattito sull'esistenza e sull'ammissibilità di un concetto come la metafora nel senso occidentale all'interno non solo della poetica ma della stessa metafisica e del pensiero cinese. Pauline Yu (1981) sostiene che sia improprio parlare di metafora cinese, poiché vi è una sostanziale differenza fra pensiero occidentale e pensiero cinese nella stessa visione del mondo e nella logica ordinatrice che la sostiene. Il pensiero occidentale si basa su precise e rigide discontinuità qualitative fra categorie di generi e specie in cui si divide il reale che possono essere violate nella retorica dalla metafora, paradossale ma creativa nei suoi effetti euristici.

Il pensiero cinese, invece, tradizionalmente intende il creato come ontologicamente omogeneo: il termine *bi* infatti sottolinea il confronto tra elementi simili o almeno coerenti, e non vi è in esso la stessa tensione presente nella metafora occidentale, che invece presuppone e premia soprattutto la differenza fra gli elementi accostati, fra i quali il poeta trova almeno un tratto unificante. Nel *bi* vi è soprattutto una giustapposizione di termini e immagini appartenenti a categorie diverse, che trovano un'unità nella complementarietà: «vi sono differenze fenomenologiche, ma non differenze ontologiche» (Yeh 1987, p. 247). È l'immanentismo della visione cinese del mondo a permettere di pensare all'universo come unito da relazioni profonde; quindi anche il procedimento del *bi*, l'accostamento e il confronto, prevede essenzialmente un'analogia fra il mondo umano del *wen* 文 e il mondo naturale delle cose. A tutto questo, però, occorre sempre aggiungere che il discorso sulla poesia cinese moderna e contemporanea, pur restando profondamente erede della tradizione poetica nazionale, risente fortemente delle suggestioni, dei procedimenti e dell'immaginario della poesia straniera. Quindi anche la metafora per molti versi viene spesso impiegata anche nella poesia cinese del Novecento nelle forme e nei modi in cui siamo soliti intenderla.

Le immagini contenute nelle liriche *menglong*, che possono ancora apparire incoerenti e inattese, in sé stesse o per il loro accostamento, provocano diffidenza nella critica ma, secondo il poeta *menglong* Gu Cheng 顾城 (1983, p. 187), in realtà la caratteristica principale della poesia *menglong* «è che essa è reale, passando dalla realtà oggettiva alla realtà soggettiva, dalla riflessione passiva alla creazione attiva». La centralità del soggetto permette di descrivere le modalità della metafora nella poesia contemporanea: senza entrare ancor più a fondo nel dibattito sulla metafora nella poesia cinese,<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Senza volermi addentrare ancora nei particolari del dibattito sul diverso concetto di metafora nella poesia cinese tradizionale e nella poesia occidentale, per i quali rimando a Yu (1981, 1987), Bokenkamp (1989) Yeh (1987, 1990, 1991) e Cheng (1996), ricorderò solo che il termine *bi* si riferisce in particolare all'analogia, cioè all'accostamento di elementi differenti per categoria ma essenzialmente affini perché in corrispondenza ontologica in un universo organico (Yeh 1991). Nella concezione tradizionale di metafora vi è una relazione organica fra gli elementi accostati, mentre nella concezione occidentale di metafora si valorizza piuttosto la distanza, la differenza tra gli elementi messi in relazione. Il *bi*, diversamente

si può ricordare, sulla scorta di Cheng (1996), che nella poesia tradizionale esistono due principali procedimenti per produrre immagini (*qingjing* 情景): il *bi* 比 (confronto), che permette il passaggio dal soggetto all'oggetto, dall'uomo alla natura e lo *xing* 兴 (incitamento) che invece innesca il processo inverso, dall'oggetto al soggetto, dalla natura all'uomo (Cheng 1996, pp. 92-94). Il procedimento del *bi* viene descritto come maggiormente simile alla metafora nel senso occidentale: esso parte dalla sfera interiore per ritrovare nella realtà esterna un elemento che lo raffiguri, ed ecco che la frase di Gu Cheng può suggerire come la nuova poesia rifuggisse ormai dal procedimento opposto, in base al quale solo il mondo esterno poteva rappresentare un'occasione di ispirazione, per approfondire poeticamente i sentimenti e i pensieri del poeta.<sup>13</sup> La stessa enfasi sulla creazione attiva e non più sulla passività porta a considerare la metafora come strumento di costruzione e di scoperta di legami profondi fra realtà diverse attraverso la sensibilità del poeta, capace di dare forma e vita al proprio mondo. Tuttavia, il quadro è ancora più complesso perché gli autori possono a volte ricorrere ad entrambe le forme tradizionali del *bi* e dello *xing*, come ad esempio Shu Ting che, come nota Hong (2009, p. 342), si basa sulle proprie emozioni per leggere il mondo esterno (come nel guardare alle stelle nella lirica già ricordata dell'autrice) o «cattura risposte emotive suscitate dai fenomeni della vita». Il *bi* quindi, come confronto o accostamento, permette di aggiungere, attraverso la mediazione della soggettività poetica, contenuti originali e unici all'elenco enciclopedico dei significati dell'elemento concreto a cui si attribuiscono nuove qualità (ad esempio le stelle).

Possiamo vedere in ciò anche la distinzione fra due piani della realtà, anche al di fuori di una precisa e consapevole concettualizzazione filosofica

dalla metafora occidentale, premia non tanto la novità ma piuttosto il miglior accostamento fra il soggetto e il mondo esteriore, il sentimento e la circostanza. «Realizzare un *bi*, creare un'analogia o una metafora, significa presentare un paio di immagini che sono paradigmatiche della corrispondenza ontologica o della 'risonanza' tra le cose nell'universo organico. Anziché la tensione e la disgiunzione che abbiamo osservato nel concetto occidentale di metafora, il *bi* presume affinità e complementarità» (Yeh 1987, p. 250). Tuttavia, come già ricordato nel testo, nella poesia cinese moderna e contemporanea il valore e l'utilizzo della metafora si avvicina spesso a quello della stessa figura retorica nella poesia occidentale, a causa dell'innegabile influenza della poesia straniera sulla poesia cinese del Novecento.

**13** Secondo il manifesto *menglong* pubblicato sul terzo pamphlet della Società di Ricerche Letterarie *Jintian* nel 1980, firmato da un autore anonimo sotto lo pseudonimo di Hong Huang 洪荒, dalla tradizione poetica cinese proviene anche l'estrema creatività metaforica della poesia *menglong*: «Dobbiamo rivitalizzare la ricca tradizione visuale della poesia cinese [...] e opporci alla logica esterna e alla sintassi come sola fonte della creazione poetica [...] Dobbiamo rivitalizzare la qualità suggestiva tradizionalmente associata alla concezione poetica cinese. Ciò può coincidere con la poetica contemporanea occidentale. Ma non significa certamente venerare servilmente ciò che è straniero» (Hong Huang 1983, pp. 191-194). Dato il generale sentimento di diffidenza verso la poesia *menglong*, accusata dai critici di essere un'imitazione pedissequa e poco patriottica della poesia 'borghese' occidentale, si può anche prendere questa dichiarazione di fedeltà alla tradizione cinese come una sorta di giustificazione e di autodifesa.

di partenza, ma sicuramente percepita e vissuta dagli autori, per tradizione poetica (fin dagli autori romantici, o influenzati dal romanticismo, degli anni Venti) e per esperienza autobiografica. Questi due piani possono essere definiti, piuttosto all'ingrosso, come il reale e l'ideale: per fare da tramite fra di essi vengono usate immagini che possono essere intese come metafore nell'accezione comune, anche se il loro compito, più che sorprendere o spingere alla riflessione, è di rivelare e trasmettere l'intuizione di questo collegamento, o anche solo l'esistenza di un mondo ideale (non necessariamente in senso platonico) dietro l'apparenza scoraggiante del mondo materiale. L'immagine delle stelle nella poesia moderna smette di essere indice di una corrispondenza fra il naturale e l'umano ma sottolinea al contrario il distacco fra l'umano e il naturale, l'alienazione dell'individuo e la sua ribellione contro le tenebre (Yeh 1991).

I poeti *menglong* raffigurano il mondo interiore utilizzando immagini dal forte contenuto metaforico, che rinviano alle riflessioni, alle emozioni e alle esperienze dell'autore e questo può spiegare anche il frequente accostamento di immagini spesso incongruenti: l'unico elemento unificante della poesia infatti è la soggettività dell'autore. In un momento di crisi delle certezze razionali il solo criterio per orientarsi nella realtà sembrava essere la sensibilità personale del soggetto.

In questo quadro, la metafora poetica diventava naturalmente sempre meno comprensibile e i suoi referenti concreti solo tentativamente reperibili. Tale atteggiamento di rottura con il passato e di provocazione (nel senso più lato che si può dare al termine) nasce dall'esigenza di rielaborare la realtà, le sue immagini e il concetto di tempo fidandosi solo della propria percezione e della propria intuizione, ed è anche un modo per riaffermare con forza delle verità che il discorso ufficiale potrebbe distorcere o nascondere, come fa con coraggio Jiang He 江河 (Yu Youze 于友泽) in *Jinianpai* 纪念碑 (Memoriale), poesia del 1977: «当死亡不可避免的时候 | 流出的血液也不会凝固 | 当祖国的土地上只有呻吟 | 真理的声音才更响亮» «Quando la morte è inevitabile | Il sangue versato non può coagulare | Quando sul suolo patrio ci sono solo lamenti | Il suono della verità echeggerà più forte» («Classical and Modern Fiction» 1985, pp. 131-133).

In quest'ottica, è facile riconoscere la frequente metafora metatestuale della poesia come luce: come la poesia sembra ormai essere l'unico mezzo per giungere a una verità più profonda, essa può essere accostata spesso alla luce che rischiarava la realtà e ne permette la lettura. Fare poesia, raggiungere il lettore e poter così illuminare i propri simili, tuttavia, è un'opera dolorosa e spesso frustrante, è una missione ingrata e solitaria, nella consapevolezza che la luce non potrà penetrare le tenebre.

Come ricorda Michelle Yeh (1991), l'immagine delle stelle e di fonti luminose fievoli e circondate dall'oscurità è un elemento costante della poesia cinese fin dall'epoca moderna, e ancora molto visibile nella poesia contemporanea. Tutte queste immagini concorrono a tratteggiare una generale

crisi di identità del poeta nella società moderna cinese e più ancora in quella contemporanea: a dispetto della tradizionale centralità della poesia e del poeta, oramai il poeta è sempre più un emarginato e la sua arte non è più tenuta in grande considerazione. Nella vasta opera di ricostruzione della figura del poeta le immagini di una luce fioca rimandano in molti casi proprio all'autorappresentazione della poesia e del poeta come debole voce incapace di farsi ascoltare dai propri contemporanei. Il senso di emarginazione trova così la sua condensazione attorno alle immagini di luci che lottano contro le tenebre senza tuttavia riuscire a vincerle, luci lontane ed effimere e che spesso si consumano tentando di illuminare gli altri, come la candela. Shu Ting 舒婷 in *Yexu* 也许 (Forse) scrive: «也许我们点起一个个灯笼 | 又被大风一个个吹灭 | 也许燃尽生命烛照黑暗 | 身边却没有取暖之火», «Forse le lampade che una ad una abbiamo acceso | vengono spente una ad una dal forte vento | forse abbiamo bruciato tutta la nostra linfa per rischiarare le tenebre | e non ci resta più fuoco in corpo per scaldarci» (Shu Ting 1994, p. 29).

La solitudine, l'esilio, storico o anche morale, il senso di insicurezza e la frustrazione del poeta trovano quindi riflesso in un campionario di immagini che rimandano la maggior parte delle volte alle stelle: come fa ancora notare Michelle Yeh (1991), esse possono essere cadenti e rappresentare una fugace esistenza mortale oppure essere lontane e inamovibili come la stella polare e rappresentare così una guida, un punto di riferimento per chi desidera avvicinarsi alla verità poetica e al tempo stesso la possibilità di conquistare l'immortalità attraverso la propria opera e di superare così l'alienazione legata alla propria condizione di emarginato. Le stelle sono quindi simbolo della pura bellezza, dell'amore, della libertà. In base a questo neoromanticismo lirico la poesia diventa trascendente, lontana dalla quotidiana realtà materiale e lontana anche dalle volgari occupazioni mondane che si svolgono alla luce del sole, un amore che si realizza nella notte, un vero e proprio culto di cui i poeti sono i sacerdoti. Le stelle, infatti, appaiono in cielo quando il sole tramonta, ma sono sempre presenti. Le stelle sono anche simbolo della speranza dei poeti: speranza nell'immortalità guadagnata attraverso la fama poetica, possibile solo presso i confratelli dello stesso culto della poesia, difficilmente presso i profani. Le stelle sono anche per definizione plurali (sono infatti quasi sempre rese nella poesia come *xingxing* 星星 o *xingqun* 星群 o ancora *xingchen* 星辰) e perciò rappresentano il senso di solidarietà e di comunità dei poeti, sempre più raccolti intorno a scuole, correnti e riviste. La tragicità della figura del poeta, poi, era esaltata dal conflitto, interiore e storico, fra la luce, le stelle, la candela da un lato e l'ombra, la tenebra, la notte in cui vivono i propri contemporanei.<sup>14</sup> Il poeta, quindi, è anche profeta inascoltato, portatore di

14 A volte anche mescolate insieme, come nell'emistichio di Duo Duo «繁星幽暗的烛火», «la debole fiamma di candela di un gran numero di stelle» in *Dang chuntian de lingche chuanguo*

una verità spiacevole che nessuno vuole accettare, preferendo l'oscurità dell'incoscienza alla problematica lucidità della parola.

È noto che la luce lunare soffonde gran parte della produzione poetica dell'epoca classica, ma in età moderna e ancor più in quella contemporanea il simbolismo lunare viene abbandonato, in parte per allontanarsi esplicitamente dalla tradizione e in parte perché il contenuto metaforico della luce lunare, ormai frusto e consunto, non può più essere efficacemente risignificato ed è necessariamente catacretico. La cataresi in senso stretto non è una metafora inventiva ma ormai ripetitiva e stereotipata: pragmaticamente è poco conoscitiva e di certo non poetica né inventiva. Ciò che invece perseguivano i poeti *menglong* era proprio la ricerca di una metafora poetica assoluta: qualcosa di mai detto prima nella lingua, una nuova luce che rinviasse al suo «momento aurorale», momento nel quale vengono fissate «cataresi istitutive», ossia espressioni metaforiche originali che poi possono col tempo divenire «cataresi istituzionalizzate» (Eco 1980). L'oscurità della poesia *menglong* è in realtà la ricerca della luce creatrice e rivelatrice: l'accusa di essere 'oscuri' proviene soprattutto dall'impiego di immagini e associazioni assolutamente inedite e non convenzionali, attraverso le quali, però, i loro autori tentavano di riprodurre l'originaria e 'adamitica' arbitrarietà del segno, intesa come possibilità di associare un significato ai referenti o di ridefinire alcuni significanti ormai logori e svuotati, facendo al tempo stesso rivivere la tradizionale natura suggestiva e 'imagista' della poesia cinese classica.

Questa moderna esperienza poetica è soprattutto l'esaltazione della soggettività, qui intesa come creazione assoluta e ribellione contro l'«ansia dell'influenza» (Bloom 1973) e come affermazione dell'unicità della propria esperienza biografica e poetica. L'immagine del poeta che viene trasmessa dal 'culto della poesia' (Yeh 1991, 1996), soffriva ancora inconsapevolmente della pesante eredità letteraria e politica del recente passato: lo spirito di sacrificio del poeta era lo stesso del romanticismo rivoluzionario e l'ammirazione per i grandi maestri della poesia tradiva probabilmente il perdurare di un forte culto della personalità, prima concentrato attorno a Mao. Tuttavia questa devozione ebbe anche il merito di contribuire a superare la crisi di identità del poeta e di sviluppare l'autonomia dell'arte e dell'artista, in particolare nella poesia della seconda metà degli anni Ottanta, con le correnti poetiche successive alla poesia *menglong*, collettivamente riunite sotto l'etichetta di Terza Generazione.

I poeti si sforzarono di risignificare in maniera estremamente rivoluzionaria i simboli della poesia precedente: Fan Xing (2012) ricorda come, dopo aver simboleggiato la rivoluzione, l'entusiasmo, l'ideale, il sole viene cari-

*kaicai liuhuang de liufangdi* 当春天的灵车穿过开采硫磺的流放地 (Quando il carro funebre di primavera passa per il luogo dell'esilio di miniere di zolfo) del 1983 (Duo Duo 1998, pp. 48-51).

cato di diversi significati proprio alla fine della Rivoluzione Culturale: gli esempi citati dall'autore sono 阳光, 谁也不能垄断 (La luce del sole nessuno può monopolizzarla) di Bai Hua 白桦 (1930-)<sup>15</sup> e 太阳 (Il sole) di Liu Shahe 流沙河 (1931-), in cui l'autore considera il sole nell'universo come un fenomeno puramente astronomico. Anche Duo Duo 多多 (Li Shizheng 李士征), che già aveva definito il chiaro di luna «nobile e spietato», e aveva denunciato il peso storico del chiaro di luna in *Shiren* 诗人 (Il poeta) del 1973 (Duo Duo 1998, pp. 30-31),<sup>16</sup> durante la Rivoluzione Culturale contrastò la poetica ufficiale descrivendo il periodo come una crudele notte di violenza e di terrore e mettendo in discussione le immagini dell'Oriente rosso e dei girasoli, che si volgono verso il sole come i giovani guardano fiduciosi verso Mao.<sup>17</sup> Era infatti una notte in cui potersi nascondere, mettere in discussione i simboli rivoluzionari e sviluppare la propria soggettività artistica lontano dal discorso politico e culturale dominante, in attesa di una prossima alba. Anche Mang Ke 芒克 (Jiang Shiwei 姜世伟) rigetta il tradizionale simbolismo politico del sole e dei girasoli che ad esso si volgono e in *Taiyang luole* 太阳落了 (Il sole è tramontato) del 1973 dubita che il sole sia Mao, anzi, afferma che la luce è ormai scomparsa dal mondo: «太阳落了。| 黑夜爬了上来, | 放肆地掠夺。| 这田野将要毁灭, | 人 | 将不知道往哪儿去了。» «Il sole è tramontato | la nera notte è strisciata fino a qui | per far razzia sfrenatamente. | Questi campi saranno devastati | le persone | non sapranno dove andare». Da notare soprattutto come il termine *ren* 人 (le persone) sia volutamente isolato per particolare enfasi: è sugli esseri umani che l'attenzione si concentra. La sfiducia nel sole, secondo Huang Yibing (2007), costringe i giovani poeti a trovare nuove fonti di luce, più tenui e meno violente, plurali e meno autoritarie. Tuttavia, come per la letteratura delle ferite, di cui la poesia *menglong* è a volte ritenuta la versione poetica, una volta esaurita la sua ansia di denuncia e di liberazione espressiva, venne meno anche la sua originalità, anche se la sua esperienza venne più o meno consapevolmente ereditata dai poeti della generazione successiva. Un famoso poeta della Terza Generazione, divenuto uno dei simboli della gioventù del Giugno 1989 (soprattutto per il suo suicidio alla vigilia dei fatti di Tian'an men) è Haizi 海子 (Zha Haisheng 查海生): nella poesia *Richu* 日出 (Alba) del 1987 si può

**15** Scritta nel novembre del 1978 la poesia invita il lettore a impegnarsi nella 'liberazione del pensiero' dopo i guasti della Rivoluzione Culturale: se la banda dei quattro è ormai sgominata, i suoi germi sono ancora nell'aria ma la verità è un patrimonio del popolo e, come la luce del sole, non può essere monopolizzata.

**16** «月光又高贵又无情» in *Shiren zhi si* 诗人之死 (La morte del poeta), del 1975 (Duo Duo 1998, pp. 10-11). Nella lirica *Shiren* 诗人 (Poeta) del 1973 Duo Duo descrive se stesso come un creatore fallito, gravato del peso del chiaro di luna e di frasi che lo tormentano e lo scavano impedendogli di comporre (Duo Duo 1998, pp. 30-31).

**17** È il caso delle due liriche *Miyue* 蜜周 (Settimana di miele), del 1972, (Duo Duo 1998, pp. 14-21) e *Xia* 夏 (Estate) del 1975 (Duo Duo 1998, pp. 42-43).

vedere il sole come simbolo di ascesa, di trascendenza, di un'elevazione consentita dalla vocazione poetica:<sup>18</sup> «在黑暗的尽头 | 太阳, 扶着我站起来 [...] | 我全身的黑暗因太阳升起而解除» «Alla fine dell'oscurità | il sole mi aiuta ad alzarmi in piedi [...] | l'oscurità di tutto mio corpo svanisce grazie al sorgere del sole» (Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 172-173).

Un altro tema derivato dalle esperienze della Rivoluzione Culturale è la transitorietà della vita e la rapidità del tempo, espresse anche connettendo direttamente alba e tramonto, come se il tempo fra questi due momenti non fosse mai trascorso o fosse stato solo un sogno, un'illusione di libertà, come in questi versi tratti da *Zhuanguo shen lai* 转过身来 (Voltarsi) di Shu Cai 树才 (1990): «清早已逝, 黄昏又来。| 抱紧时间的人类叹息: “逝者如斯”», «L'alba è passata, ritorna il crepuscolo. | L'umanità si stringe al tempo e sospira: “Come passa!”» (Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 192-193). O come in questi versi di Duo Duo, tratti da *Wu nian* 五年 (Cinque anni) del 1993: «五支蜡烛熄灭 | [...] 五年内二十代虫子死光。» «Cinque candele si spengono | [...] nel giro di cinque anni sono morte venti generazioni di insetti» (Duo Duo 1998, pp. 104-105).<sup>19</sup>

L'alba o ancor più il tramonto spingono alla riflessione sul passato e sui ricordi: l'alba rimanda spesso al futuro, alle nuove possibilità; il crepuscolo – per quanto spesso rasserrenante – rappresenta l'inarrestabile trascorrere del tempo e richiama alla memoria il passato personale dell'autore, che pur potendo essere consolante perché coincide con la giovinezza, è inevitabilmente contaminato dal passato della Storia, che il poeta ha subito sulla propria pelle. Come recita Duo Duo in *Shiren zhi si* 诗人之死 (La morte del poeta) del 1974: «在同一个黄昏, 在同一个黎明 | 听不到挽歌, 也听不到钟声 | [...] 没有回答, 也没有回声 | 只有幽灵的火把, 照亮我的一生.....», «in un identico crepuscolo, in un identico albeggiare | non si odono elegie né suoni di campane | non ci sono risposte né echi | ci sono solo fiaccole di spettri, illuminano tutta la mia esistenza...» (Duo Duo 1998, pp. 10-11). Le fiaccole degli spettri rappresentano probabilmente il ricordo delle persone care, degli amici o dei confratelli della poesia ormai presenti solo nella memoria del poeta: al di fuori di essa per loro non ci sono celebrazioni o possibilità di dialogo. Anche Xi Chuan in *Muse* 暮色 (Crepuscolo), del 1987, scrive: «每当暮色降临, 便有人 | 轻轻叩响我的家门» «ogni volta che cala il crepuscolo | qualcuno bussa alla mia porta» (Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 178-179) e allo stesso modo per Mang Ke in *Siyue* 四月 (Aprile) la contemplazione del tempo che passa è contaminata dal ricordo doloroso dei morti:

18 A riportare tutto sul piano più 'terreno' interviene poi la postilla alla poesia, che rivela come essa venne scritta dopo una sbornia; in ogni caso, il sottotitolo del componimento è «见于一个无比幸福早晨的日出» «Visto all'alba di un mattino incomparabilmente lieto».

19 I cinque anni trascorsi sono quelli che separano l'autore dai fatti di piazza Tian'anmen del 1989.

20 Questo verso non può non far pensare ad un ironico riferimento alla celebre apertura de *La terra desolata* di T. S. Eliot: «April is the cruellest month [...]» ([1922] 1969, p. 61,



[...]  
 这是四月  
 四月和其它的月份一样  
 但若是它驱使你  
 无法不去把往事回想  
 无法不再一次潜入记忆深处  
 [...]  
 1983年

[...]  
 Questo è aprile  
 un mese come gli altri<sup>20</sup>  
 ma se ti costringe  
 non puoi che ripensare al passato  
 e immergerti di nuovo nel ricordo  
 [...]  
 1983  
 (Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 24-25)

Un altro esempio si ha in *Mei you shijian de shijian* 没有时间的时间 (Il tempo senza tempo), sempre di Mang Ke (1992, pp. 86-87): «[...] 我们送走了一个死去的日子 | 那一个死去的日子 | 已埋进土里, 渐渐变成白骨 | 我们也曾为我们失去每一天 | 和失去阳光而伤过心 [...]», «abbiamo passato uno ad uno giorni morti | uno ad uno quei giorni morti | già sepolti nella terra, pian piano si trasformano in ossa bianche | per ogni giorno perduto | per la luce [solare] perduta duole il cuore».<sup>21</sup>

La poesia e la sua luce divengono così anche un memento, un esercizio di memoria contro il rischio di restare prigionieri dei propri traumi e contro la tentazione di un facile e narcotico oblio. Il soggettivismo della poesia e la sua natura impressionista acquistano così una funzione morale: dall'attimo, dall'impressione fugace, attraverso l'arte e l'oggettivizzazione della percezione e della sensibilità personale, si riesce a fissare alcuni momenti della storia e le sensazioni da essi ispirate, che rischiano altrimenti di perdersi e di dissolversi nel tempo esterno alla poesia, ricollegandosi così alla poesia moderna, simbolista e modernista. Le illuminazioni di cui gode il poeta sono attimi di ispirazione e di illuminazione in cui egli può avere una chiara visione della realtà, come in *Mou ye* 某夜 (Una notte) di Yang Lian 杨炼: «世界现在取下了面具 | 露出黑黝黝的头颅» «ora il mondo ha posato la sua maschera | e scopre la sua testa nera come la pece» (Darras 2004, pp. 26-27).

v. 1). L'aprile a cui probabilmente l'autore ripensa è quello del 1976, ossia le dimostrazioni in piazza Tian'an men dopo la morte di Zhou Enlai; inoltre, aprile è anche il mese in cui normalmente cade la *Qingmingjie* 清明节. Sempre ad aprile - e quasi sicuramente all'aprile del 1976 - si rivolge Bei Dao nella poesia *Si yue* 四月 (Aprile), di cui cito qui il distico conclusivo: «星星, 那些小小的拳头 | 集结着浩大的游行» «Stelle, quei minuscoli pugni | si ammassano in una grandiosa manifestazione» (Bei Dao 2003, pp. 60-61).

**21** Lo stesso amaro ricordo ispira anche Jiang He nella poesia *Cong zheli kaishi* 从这里开始 (Inizia da qui), composta da cinque sequenze di un ciclo epico-personale che descrivono la vita del poeta attraverso *Kumen* 苦闷 (Dispiacere), *Qingchun* 青春 (Giovinezza), *Shangxin de ge* 伤心的歌 (Canzone del dolore) («Classical and Modern Fiction» 1985, pp. 137-139), *Chensi* 沉思 (Meditazione), *Cong zheli kaishi* 从这里开始 (Inizia da qui) (Mists 1983, pp. 228-234). I titoli delle poesie che compongono il ciclo *Begin from here* nella traduzione inglese contenuta sono: *Sorrow, Youth, Song of Grief* («Classical and Modern Fiction» 1985, pp. 137-139), *Meditation* e *Begin from Here* (Mists 1983, pp. 228-234).

La poesia, per quanto debole sia il suo chiarore, rappresenta inoltre la possibilità di capire e affrontare la realtà più oscura. In *Deng* 灯 (Lampada) di Mang Ke, si può rintracciare la metafora della poesia e del poeta di fronte alla diffidenza del mondo circostante, che preferirebbe invece morire nell'oscurità:<sup>22</sup>

[...]

灯突然亮了  
这灯光引起了一阵骚乱  
就听醉汉们大声嚷嚷  
它是从哪儿飞来的  
我们为什么还不把它赶走  
我们为什么要让它们来啄食我们  
我们宁愿在黑暗中死.....  
1983年

[...]

La lampada d'improvviso s'accende  
questa luce porta un gran disordine  
ecco s'ode il baccano degli ubriachi:  
da dove salta fuori?  
perché non la scacciamo?  
perché lasciamo che venga a beccarci?  
Meglio morire nell'oscurità...  
1983  
(Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 42-43)

Alcune fioche fonti di luce possono ben rappresentare la voce del poeta: ad esempio la luce delle candele in Bei Dao (Zhao Zhenkai 赵振开), nel primo verso di *Duoshi zhi qiu* 多事之秋 (Stagione movimentata): «深深陷入黑暗的蜡烛 | 在知识的页岩中寻找标本», «La candela che sprofonda nel buio | cerca reperti tra gli scisti del sapere» (Bei Dao 2003, pp. 74-75). Secondo Claudia Pozzana (2010) il poeta rappresenta qui la poesia come gravata da una tradizione secolare con cui è difficile fare i conti ma che non si può ignorare: pertanto, la poesia si inserisce nelle linee di frattura, nelle pieghe e negli scisti, appunto, dei saperi tradizionali, illuminando con la sua debole luce una verità non ufficiale ma soggettiva; inoltre, in *Lingdu yishang de fengjing* 零度以上的风景 (Paesaggio sopra zero), sempre Bei Dao (2003, p. 112) afferma: «是父亲确认了黑暗 | 是黑暗通向经典的闪电», «è il padre che conferma l'oscurità | è l'oscurità che conduce al bagliore dei classici». Se l'establishment culturale, autoproclamato difensore dell'ortodossia

22 Suggerzioni simili si possono percepire anche nelle tre poesie di Yang Lian che compongono *Mudi* 墓地 (Tomba) («Classical and Modern Fiction» 1985, pp. 149-152) in cui un morto, circondato dalle tenebre, si rivolge ai viventi per ammonirli. È missione del poeta quella di illuminare e mostrare la luce a uomini che invece sembrano preferire l'oscurità: ad esempio, in *The Waste Land* di Eliot, in *The Burial of the Dead*: «Unreal City, | Under, the brown fog of a winter dawn, | A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, | I had not thought death had undone so many. | Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, | And each man fixed his eyes before his feet». ([1922] 1969, p. 62, vv. 60-65). La stessa triste realtà di anime abitate all'oscurità si ritrova in *Huobajie* 火把节 (Festival delle torce) di Yang Lian: «我询问一双双凝滞着山群阴影的 | 眼睛, 一扇扇贫苦灵魂的窗口 | 没有灯光——像久已熄灭的火塘» «Interrogo ogni paio di occhi impigriti dal lato in ombra delle montagne, [lo *yin* 阴 definito da Granet (1973, p. 27) con il termine patois *hubac* (*ad opacum*), ossia 'nord della montagna, sud del fiume'] | ogni finestra di anime miserabili | non c'è alcuna luce - come un caminetto da lungo tempo spento» («Classical and Modern Fiction» 1985, pp. 142 e 145).

critica e della tradizione letteraria, bollava la nuova poesia come 'oscura' per denigrarla e confinarla nell'ambito ristretto di un effimero esperimento, è proprio il rinnovamento del linguaggio e delle tematiche poetiche operato dalla poesia *menglong* a produrre una rilettura della stessa tradizione letteraria. Come accade molto spesso nella storia letteraria cinese, il richiamo alle esperienze poetiche precedenti ha spesso i connotati di una «riforma reazionaria», che fa del passato un «costrutto immaginario» (Wang 2010, p. 423) definito soprattutto in base alle esigenze e alle aspettative dell'attualità. Queste pretese restaurazioni letterarie sono spesso necessarie per giustificare l'inserimento nel corpo di un'ingombrante eredità passata - novità altrimenti difficili da far accettare: il recupero della tradizione imagista della poesia cinese diventa la giustificazione per una rilettura creativa - non scevra da influenze occidentali di una tradizione più recente, quella del Quattro Maggio - della poesia cinese. Confermare l'oscurità della poesia presente può certamente far risaltare la chiarezza dei classici ma è arricchendo la tradizione, contestandola, che si può riscoprire e rileggere la letteratura del passato.

La luce delle stelle è la suprema metafora della poesia e del poeta, e come tale è un'immagine che ebbe grande fortuna anche nella poesia successiva alla Rivoluzione Culturale. Anche le meteore e le comete sono molto presenti: l'immagine della cometa come simbolo della poesia e del poeta è sicuramente evidente in *Huixing* 彗星 (Cometa) del 1988 («Post-Misty Poetry» 1992, pp. 134-135) di Ouyang Jianghe 欧阳江河 in cui il fulgore accecante ma fugace della cometa viene accostato all'esistenza romantica del genio poetico, consumato dalla sua stessa passione e dal sacrificio di sé. Le stelle possono anche essere una guida e un modello, come ad esempio in *Jiushi nian jiu yue shiwu ri* 90年9月15日 (15 settembre 1990) di Shu Cai del 1992 (Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 198-199). Infine, occorre citare anche due liriche di Jiang He: la prima, *Xing* 星 (Stella) («Classical and Modern Fiction» 1985, pp. 134-136) in cui si possono ritrovare profondi sentimenti di nostalgia per la propria infanzia, trascorsa guardando le stelle, promesse di speranza di un futuro diverso; la seconda, *Xingxing bianzouqu* 星星变奏曲 (Variazione sulle stelle) («Classical and Modern Fiction» 1985, pp. 135-136) in cui l'autore ribadisce l'importanza delle stelle, fonte di speranza e tensione verso l'alto: «如果大地的每个角落都充满了光明 | 谁还需要星星 [...]» «Se ogni angolo del mondo fosse pieno di luce | chi avrebbe ancora bisogno delle stelle?» e allo stesso modo, si chiede il poeta, chi avrebbe ancora voglia di scrivere poesie piene di stelle tremolanti?

La luce è infatti un elemento importante anche per la stessa esistenza del testo poetico: là dove la luce è eccessiva o assente la poesia perde le possibilità espressive che acquista, anche solo potenzialmente, nei momenti di passaggio dalla luce alla tenebra o dalla notte all'alba. Nel pieno sole o nel buio più completo svanisce la libertà dell'artista e sicuramente si fa più arduo il suo tentativo di illuminare la realtà: una luminosità eccessiva,

come quella accecante del sole, spesso assunto come simbolo del potere politico, annulla ogni altra fonte di luce e impedisce di potersi nascondere e di potersi esprimere con relativa libertà. Se una luce accecante è tradizionalmente associata alla razionalità, soprattutto quella politica, anche il buio è un'immagine storicamente leggibile come l'assenza di razionalità e l'impossibilità di ogni libera creazione (in particolare, per l'esperienza di questa generazione, la Rivoluzione Culturale), con cui occorre comunque fare i conti. Gu Cheng, in *Rongdian* 熔点 (Punto di fusione), ci ricorda che «没有一只鸟能躲过白天 | 正像, 没有一个人能避免 | 自己 | 避免黑暗», «Nessun uccello può nascondersi dal chiarore del giorno | allo stesso modo, nessuno può sfuggire | a sé stesso | sfuggire all'oscurità», e nella sua famosa lirica del 1979 *Yi dai ren* 一代人 (Una generazione) lo stesso autore afferma:

黑夜给了我黑色的眼睛，  
我却用它寻找光明。

La notte nera mi ha dato occhi neri  
ma li uso per cercare la luce  
(Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 72-73)

Il crepuscolo, l'aurora, la semioscurità e l'albedo, invece, sono momenti in cui il poeta può ritagliare per sé e la propria opera uno spazio di creazione, sono attimi sospesi e misteriosi, colmi di promesse e di ricordi, in cui il pensiero può farsi libero e perfino eretico.

Anche se la luce lunare sembra ormai tramontata nella poesia, ritorna volutamente l'uso di immagini che indicano il passaggio dalla luce all'ombra, dall'illuminazione alla tenebra - una delle definizioni di *menglong* indica infatti la luna che sta per sparire dietro le nuvole.

Uno dei termini del lessico della luce che più è ricorrente nella poesia *menglong* è certamente *huanghun* 黄昏 (Il crepuscolo), inteso come momento liminale e interstiziale tra due momenti meglio definiti dalla predominanza della luce o dell'ombra, e altrettanto ricorrente è il termine *liming* 黎明 (l'alba), come anche il termine *qingchen* 清晨. Nell'ambito dell'oscurità si usano spesso anche *hei'an* 黑暗 (tenebre), *muse* 暮色 (crepuscolo) per cui si usa spesso anche *xiyang* 夕阳 mentre per indicare il tramonto si trova spesso anche *wanxia* 晚霞.<sup>23</sup>

23 Secondo lo *Xiandai Hanyu da cidian* 现代汉语大词典 il termine *muse* 暮色 indica «*bangwan hun'an de tianse*» «*傍晚昏暗的天色*» (il colore del cielo al momento del crepuscolo); altri termini ricorrenti per indicare il crepuscolo sono *xiyang* 夕阳, definito come «*bangwan de taiyang*» «*傍晚的太阳*» (il sole al crepuscolo) dallo *Xiandai Hanyu da cidian*, mentre per l'alba spesso si trova *qingchen* 清晨; per indicare il tramonto si trova spesso anche *wanxia* 晚霞, definito dallo stesso dizionario «*bangwan chuxian zai xibian tiankong zhong de xia*» «*傍晚出现在西边天空中的霞*» (Le nuvole rosee che appaiono la sera in cielo ad ovest). In sé il termine *xia* 霞 indica in particolare una luce indiretta e velata: «*Richu riluo shi tiankong ji yunceng shang yin riguang xieshe er chuxian de caise guangxiang huo caise de yun*» «*日出、日落时天空及云层上因日光斜射而出现的彩色光象或彩色的云*» (Le nuvole colorate o la luce colorata che appaiono quando i raggi

Gu Cheng, che in una sua lirica del 1973 *Wo shi huanghun de erzi* 我是黄昏的儿子 (Sono il figlio del crepuscolo) si definisce *huanghun de erzi* 黄昏的儿子 (figlio del crepuscolo), in *Huigui* 回归 (Ritorno) definisce la luce dell'alba proprio con l'aggettivo *menglong* 朦胧, della cui suggestiva ricchezza lessicale abbiamo già dato conto.<sup>24</sup>

Le stelle e le deboli luci che sfidano la notte, come le torce di Yang Lian in *Huobajie* 火把节 (Festival delle torce) («Classical and Modern Fiction» 1985, pp. 140-148), rappresentano meglio di ogni altra fonte luminosa la natura e il lavoro del poeta: con il loro baluginio esse rischiarano la notte senza poterla vincere, ma danno a chi le guarda una speranza; esse sono solitarie e sparse ma sempre raccolte in costellazioni; potrebbero essere ormai spente ma la loro luce ancora giunge agli occhi di chi le guarda, come i poeti ormai estinti possono ancora mandare la propria luce sulla terra. Esse tuttavia possono anche rappresentare un orizzonte futuro al quale guardare e tendere. Ad esempio, nella poesia *Huida* 回答 (Risposta) di Bei Dao, l'autore chiude con una nota ottimista la sua solenne dichiarazione di incredulità con questi versi, riaffermando al tempo stesso il senso di responsabilità del poeta di fronte, in questo caso, ai posteri:

新的转机和闪闪的星斗，  
正在缀满没有遮拦的天空，  
那是五千年的象形文字，  
那是未来人们凝视的眼睛。

Nuove svolte e stelle brillanti  
ora decorano il cielo sconfinato,  
sono i pittogrammi di cinquemila anni,  
sono gli occhi degli uomini del futuro che fissi  
[guardano.  
(Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 4-5)

La dialettica di luce e tenebre rappresenta anche l'inevitabile trascorrere del tempo, con tutte le cicatrici e i ricordi che esso lascia. Questa dialettica è anche probabilmente un residuo della formazione politica marxista e dell'influenza del romanticismo rivoluzionario dell'epoca in cui questi poeti erano cresciuti e dalla quale erano ancora fortemente condizionati. I poeti della Seconda Generazione, infatti, per quanto eredi dei saloni letterari che avevano riunito giovani intellettuali e soprattutto giovani poeti

del sole cadono obliqui sulle nuvole o sul cielo all'alba e al tramonto). Altri termini frequenti per descrivere l'oscurità sono *mingse* 冥色 ('buio', 'scuro' ma anche 'astruso', 'complicato'), oltre a *muse* 暮色 (crepuscolo) e *yese* 夜色 (buio della notte) oppure anche *you'an* 幽暗 (cupo) e *hei'an* 黑暗 (oscuro) e infine *luori* 落日 (il tramonto, reso anche come *xiyang* 夕阳); anche il termine *guangmang* 光芒 ('chiarore', 'raggi di luce', nello *Xiandai Hanyu cidian* «辐射的强烈光线。常用于比喻» «Intensi raggi di luce. Spesso usati in senso metaforico»), è assai frequente nelle liriche prese in esame.

24 Anche Xi Du, descrive la cesura segnata dalla fine della Rivoluzione Culturale (la notte, appunto) descrivendo il mattino di una nuova generazione: la sera precedente quel mattino è definita «*menglong de shuse*» «*朦朧的曙色*» (un crepuscolo opaco) (*Wenhua da geming jieshu de rizi* 文化大革命结束的日子 [Il giorno in cui la Rivoluzione Culturale finì], Darras 2004, pp. 124-127).

nei primi anni Sessanta,<sup>25</sup> erano soprattutto figli dell'educazione socialista e della Rivoluzione Culturale. La loro formazione poetica ed estetica ebbe luogo durante l'apogeo del maoismo, sebbene la loro sensibilità e le loro tragiche esperienze li abbiano condotti a risultati ben diversi dai quelli della poesia ufficiale. Molti elementi dell'educazione maoista sopravvivono nella *forma mentis* dei poeti oscuri e condizionano la loro visione di un mondo spesso distinto in maniera rigidamente dialettica in luce e tenebra: perfino Ai Qing, ancora nel 1978, in *Hongqi* 红旗 (Bandiera rossa) descrive il passaggio da una lunga e tenebrosa notte alla luce portata dalla bandiera rossa, simbolo del riscatto proletario (Hsu, Wang 1980, pp. 917-918). Lo sforzo di superare questo dualismo, però, si avverte nell'insistenza su luci deboli e sfumate, che rivelano l'ambiguità della realtà, un cauto timore nei confronti della storia e del futuro e una certa diffidenza nei confronti dei propri simili, tutti frutti amari delle proprie esperienze storiche.

La presenza costante della luce nelle sue varie sfumature può essere presa anche come una reazione alla tradizionale assenza del tempo nella poesia, alla sincronicità del testo poetico: soprattutto in Bei Dao è evidente lo scorrere del tempo, delle stagioni e della vita. In quasi tutti gli autori, poi è innegabile il senso di malinconia che traspare dai propri ricordi poetici. L'antitesi di luce e ombra può essere inteso anche come alternanza di speranza e disperazione, un confronto tra passato e futuro, tra vecchiaia e giovinezza, con una particolare insistenza sul presente e sul soggetto parlante, spesso sottolineata dall'uso di deittici, della prima persona ed eventualmente di un pronome di seconda persona a cui si rivolge il poeta. Il presente e il soggetto parlante in prima persona fanno da punto di riferimento per la descrizione del mondo poetica interiore dell'autore. In *Shunzhe shouzhì* 顺着手指 (Seguendo il mio dito) di Shu Cai si legge: «过去的, 和将来的 | 压得成年人喘不过气来。» «Passato e futuro | premono sugli adulti fino a toglier loro il respiro» (Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 196-197), mentre solo il presente conta davvero, ed è questa l'essenza della rivista *Jintian* attorno alla quale si riunì fra il 1978 e il 1980 la maggior parte dei poeti *menglong*. In *Zhi duzhe* 致

25 Fra questi citiamo il gruppo clandestino di poesia chiamato *X shishe* X 诗社 (Società poetica X) formato da Guo Shiyong 郭世英, figlio di Guo Moruo 郭沫若, nel febbraio 1963. I suoi membri vennero arrestati tre mesi dopo per attività controrivoluzionarie e cinque anni dopo, nel 1968 Guo Shiyong venne ucciso dalle Guardie Rosse. Un altro gruppo poetico che riuniva Zhang Langlang 张朗朗, il fondatore, e altri compagni di studi animati dal desiderio di fare una poesia libera era *Taiyang zongdui* 太阳纵队 (La colonna del sole), creato nel 1962. Anche questo gruppo venne condannato come reazionario nel 1966 e il suo fondatore passò dieci anni in carcere. Guo Lusheng, uno degli autori che ispirò la nuova generazione dei poeti *menglong* già durante la Rivoluzione Culturale con le sue poesie fatte circolare in forma clandestina e che in seguito pubblicò su *Jintian*, era amico di Guo Shiyong e di Zhang Langlang. Altri gruppi poetici al di fuori di Pechino erano il *Peiduofei julebu* 裴多菲俱乐部 (Club Petöfi) di Guiyang, attivo dagli anni Cinquanta e il *Yeya shalong* 野鸭沙龙 (Il salone dell'oca selvatica) (Yeh 2010). Ricordiamo ancora che il primo nucleo della Seconda Generazione dei poeti contemporanei fu proprio un raggruppamento simile, il Gruppo poetico delle paludi di Baiyang.

读者 (Al lettore) di Bei Dao, pubblicato sul numero inaugurale del dicembre 1978, si legge: «过去的已经过去, 未来尚且遥远, 对于我们这代人来讲, 今天, 只有今天», «Il passato è già passato, il futuro è ancora lontano, per la nostra generazione c'è solo l'oggi» (citato in Song 2006, pp. 216-217).

La luce rappresenta un flusso carico di potenzialità, come la giovinezza e il futuro, oppure come una pagina bianca; l'oscurità è un ostacolo (come quello che produce l'ombra contrastando la luce), che è il nero della scrittura e di una lingua rigidamente codificata, la stessa in cui si sentivano intrappolati i poeti *menglong*. La stessa inevitabile dialettica pertanto si ritrova nella scrittura poetica attraverso alcuni casi di semantizzazione del significante: la scrittura stessa diventa il buio, poiché non esiste altro mezzo per superare l'accecante e liberatorio candore della pagina vuota, che è il simbolo di una totale luminosità come di una totale assenza, presupposto per una completa libertà di creazione. Questo si può notare nelle forme poetiche più sperimentali, in cui la forma della poesia si presenta sparsa sulla pagina e la luce filtra attraverso le parole, come fra le *Men* 门 (Porte) di Ma Desheng 马德生 (Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 110-115):<sup>26</sup>

[...]

黑色不是因为 在黑暗中

一秒钟

就是一个世界

把

生活

嚼碎

咽了

排泄了

语言

把

语言

播种在

空气里

长出了

语言的

世界

[...]

[...]

Il nero non è tale perché sta

nell'oscurità

Un secondo

È un mondo intero

La

Vita

La mastica

L'inghiotte

Evacua

La lingua

La

Lingua

La sparge

Nell'aria

Nasce

Un mondo

Di lingua

In altri casi la luce viene negata interamente da un fittissimo flusso di coscienza che satura la forma sopprimendo il verso e l'accapo e costruisce un testo impenetrabilmente compatto, come mostra ancora Ma Desheng (Pozzana, Russo 1996, pp. 116-117) in *Jieshou sishen fangcai qian de ershisi xiaoshi* (jiexuan) 接受死神采访前的二十四小时 (节选) (Da *Ventiquattro ore prima dell'incontro col dio della morte*):

<sup>26</sup> Vale la pena ricordare che Ma Desheng fu uno dei fondatori del collettivo di pittori chiamato *Xingxing* 星星 (Le stelle), molto legato alla rivista *Jintian* 今天 (Oggi).





L'eliminazione della struttura poetica classica in versi e strofe e perfino della logica del discorso traduce l'inaffidabilità del linguaggio, la sfiducia verso una razionalità ormai abusata e la stanchezza della forma.

La notte è legata anche al silenzio, all'impossibilità dell'espressione, per questo il carattere *mo* 默 (silenzioso), in cui è presente il radicale *hei* 黑 (nero), ricorre con una notevole frequenza nella poesia *menglong*. La luce è, per contrasto, metafora del linguaggio e della stessa possibilità di esprimersi; di qui la necessità per il poeta di fare luce, e la sua missione contro «l'oscurità in cui credono fermamente i topi di campagna» «田鼠们所坚信的黑暗», da *Beijing* 背景 (Sfondo) di Bei Dao (2003, pp. 94-95), anche sotto «un cielo dominato dai raggi della lingua inglese» «英语光线支配下的天空», da *Jieri* 节日 (Festa) di Duo Duo (1998, pp. 110-119), poesia del 1996, ossia in un'epoca in cui la stessa identità culturale cinese sembrava intaccata dalla preferenza per le lingue straniere, in particolare l'inglese, la lingua della modernità, dello sviluppo economico e commerciale, della pubblicità e del consumismo. Con questa lirica di Duo Duo siamo in effetti ben oltre il periodo di esaurimento della poesia oscura, in cui rimane solo qualche ricordo del simbolismo e dell'immaginazione di coloro che erano stati – e forse in fondo erano ancora – poeti oscuri. Tuttavia, l'oscurità poteva essere una posizione adeguata per contrastare la retorica ufficiale in un'epoca di relativo pluralismo ideologico e creativo, anche per conservare il ricordo di un'epoca buia appena trascorsa e troppo facilmente liquidata dalla politica in nome delle quattro modernizzazioni; dopo i fatti di Tian'anmen, se non fosse ormai bastata l'offensiva critica della Terza Generazione, sarebbe stato forse più utile reagire riaffermando la luminosità e la comprensibilità della parola poetica, se non che la spossatezza storica e la marginalizzazione sociale dei poeti, ormai orfani di un largo pubblico e giunti in molti casi all'esaurimento delle loro possibilità espressive, ispirarono loro temi più intimi, personali e sconsolati.

La lingua, lo strumento utilizzato dai poeti per penetrare la realtà e giungere a una conoscenza più pura e profonda della realtà, non contaminata da condizionamenti storici, rappresenta quindi una fiaccola con cui illuminare e interpretare il mondo. Per questo la poesia è il solo mezzo a disposizione del poeta per raggiungere i propri simili, come rivela Gu Cheng (Darras 2004, pp. 56-57) in *Yexu, wo shi mangren* 也许，我是盲人 (Forse sono cieco):

也许，我是盲人  
我只能用声音触摸你们  
我只能把诗象手掌一样张开  
伸向你们  
[...]

Forse sono cieco  
posso sfiorarvi solo con la voce  
posso solo aprire la poesia come il palmo  
della mano  
e stenderla verso di voi  
[...]

Vale la pena di ricordare anche la poesia di Chen Dongdong 陈东东, autore appartenente alla Terza Generazione, intitolata *Dian deng* 点灯 (Accendi la lampada) (1985, in Zhang, Chen 2007, pp. 34-35). In particolare, gli ultimi versi del componimento dimostrano ancora una volta come la poesia sia equiparata alla luce e come il compito del poeta sia di illuminare i propri simili:

[...] 当我用手去阻挡北风  
当我站到了峡谷之间  
我想他们会向我围绕  
会来看我灯一样的  
语言

[...] mentre fermo con le mani il vento del nord  
mentre sto in piedi, fermo in mezzo alla forra  
voglio che si facciano intorno a me  
e vengano a leggere le mie parole  
simili ad una lampada

È interessante notare come sia messo in rilievo, isolandolo, il termine *yuyan* 语言 (lingua, parola) su cui si concentra l'attenzione alla fine della strofa; inoltre, il poeta non si fa ascoltare, ma si fa 'leggere' o 'guardare' (*kan* 看), come si guarderebbe appunto una lampada. Nel resto del componimento il poeta invita ad accendere una lampada nella pietra, ossia là dove meno sarebbe possibile farlo (come a indicare l'incapacità di farsi ascoltare dai propri simili) e invita a mostrare 'loro' - il complemento non viene specificato se non con un generico 他们 *tamen* - anzi, più precisamente, a far loro guardare la luce e il tramonto, fra le altre cose: «也应该让他们看看亮光 | [...] | 也应该让他们看看落日» «E fai guardare loro la luce | [...] | e fai guardare loro il tramonto». Tuttavia, il tono non è più tragico come per i poeti *menglong*, anzi sembra suggerire una distaccata e ironica autosufficienza della poesia: se vogliono vengano pure a leggere/guardare le parole del poeta per essere illuminati.

Allorché la poesia non raggiunge nessuno o il poeta non riesce a farsi sentire, ecco che ritorna l'oscurità e il silenzio. Non si tratta più, però, di una notte o di un crepuscolo consolante e protettivo, ma del naufragio delle speranze riacquistate dopo la 'notte nera' già vissuta e che sembra ormai definitivamente superata. Un ottimo esempio può essere fornito dalla poesia *Mei you* 没有 (Non c'è) del 1991 di Duo Duo, scritta durante il suo esilio in Olanda dopo i fatti di piazza Tian'anmen. In essa, all'amara constatazione che «没有语言», «non vi è più linguaggio» si accosta come contrappunto la parallela affermazione «没有光», «non vi è più luce» e infine «没有黎明», «non vi è alba». <sup>27</sup>

Volendo trarre alcune possibili interpretazioni del valore metaforico

27 La chiusa della poesia su una nota tanto fosca come l'assenza di un'alba, oltre alla situazione 'extratestuale' del poeta come esule, ricorda da vicino una lirica di Anna Achmatova (1889-1966) dedicata all'amico Osip Mandel'stam (1891-1938), confinato a Voronež: «Ma nella stanza del poeta in disgrazia | vegliano a turno la paura e la Musa. | Ed una notte avanza | che non conosce aurora». (Achmatova 1992, pp. 128-129).

della luce, delle sue fonti e della sua negazione nella poesia cinese contemporanea, si può pensare che questi elementi rappresentino in molti casi il potere gnoseologico e perfino profetico della poesia. Il contesto storico, in cui il buio che raffigura il presente (per la poesia clandestina scritta durante la Rivoluzione Culturale, ma anche l'alienazione e la solitudine nel periodo successivo) o il passato, si trova in alternanza o in contrasto con la luce proveniente da timide fonti luminose: ciò descrive il contrasto fra la soggettività del poeta in opposizione alla realtà esteriore, il trascorrere del tempo in una sovrapposizione di piani temporali con rimandi continui fra presente, passato e futuro. La crisi successiva alla Rivoluzione Culturale provocò nei poeti l'esigenza di trovare una strada nella nebbia e nell'oscurità del presente e del ricordo per cercare la luce, e fu proprio la poesia lo strumento con il quale poter ricostruire il senso della realtà contingente e della storia. La poesia, oltre a essere un potente strumento conoscitivo, diventa così anche l'ambito della riflessione sulla lingua, sul potere e sul ruolo del poeta. La poesia stessa è la luce: la torcia, le stelle, la lampada sono tutti strumenti utili per orientarsi; inoltre, le stelle, come le torce di Yang Lian, sono sempre numerose: la poesia è così un rito collettivo, la sintesi di una tradizione millenaria che si rinnova nella sperimentazione, come quella della poesia *menglong*.

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## Metafore di una metafora La retorica del 'sogno cinese'

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**Abstract** Following the profound changes in the Chinese socio-economic structure in the Post-Mao era (1976-), Chinese political language is also undergoing rapid changes – it is becoming more abstract and depoliticised. Alongside the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, political language has enhanced its power by using concepts and linguistic forms which belong to traditional Chinese culture. The 'Chinese dream', the concept fostered by the current Chinese leadership, is a clear expression of this trend. In the view of the fifth generation of Chinese leaders, with president Xi Jinping at its 'core', the 'Chinese dream' is a grand process of 'national renaissance' following a century of 'humiliation' at the hands of the West and Japan, and is about to be realized. From this perspective, it is shared by all Chinese people and it will satisfy the dreams of all Chinese. But what exactly does this 'common Chinese dream' mean, and what does the metaphor of the dream obscure? In order to answer these questions and scrutinise the ideology which upholds Chinese political discourse, one of the most interesting levels of analysis is that of its figurative language, particularly metaphor. In light of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) important contribution, the analysis of the meaning of the 'Chinese dream' is conducted through the examination and interpretation of the conceptual metaphors as used by Xi Jinping in two of his speeches, where he explains this concept. Metaphor is one of the most powerful persuasive means used by politicians, hence, its analysis is a useful tool for discovering and understanding the current Chinese leadership's rhetoric strategy and its principal goals.

**Sommario** 1 Introduzione. – 2 Metodologia. – 3 Analisi del linguaggio metaforico della prolusione tenuta in occasione dell'ANP. – 3.1 La metafora della famiglia. – 3.2 La metafora della strada. – 3.3 La metafora bellica – 3.4 La metafora della costruzioni – 3.5 La metafora della natura – 3.6 La metafora dell'essere vivente – 4 Analisi del linguaggio metaforico del discorso tenuto in occasione della ricorrenza Quattro Maggio. – 4.1 La metafora della famiglia – 4.2 La metafora del viaggio e della strada – 4.3 La metafora bellica – 4.4 La metafora delle costruzioni – 4.5 La metafora della natura – 5 Riflessioni sul valore delle metafore che strutturano il concetto di 'sogno cinese'.

**Keywords** Metaphor. Chinese political language. Xi Jinping. 'Chinese dream'.

Con la radicale trasformazione della struttura socio-economica cinese nell'epoca post-maoista (1976-), anche il linguaggio politico subisce cambiamenti profondi, tendendo a una graduale astrazione e depoliticizzazione. Alla retorica marxista-leninista si affiancano sempre più concetti e forme linguistiche proprie della cultura tradizionale. Il 'sogno cinese', promosso dall'attuale dirigenza, è chiara espressione di questa tendenza. Nella visione della quinta generazione di leader, il cui 'nucleo' è Xi Jinping, il 'sogno cinese' consiste in un processo di 'rinascita nazionale', che sta



per realizzarsi dopo il secolo di umiliazione ad opera dell'Occidente e del Giappone. In tale prospettiva, il 'sogno cinese' rappresenta la comune aspirazione di tutto il popolo cinese e, allo stesso tempo, realizza i sogni dei singoli individui. Ma in cosa consiste esattamente il 'comune sogno cinese'? Cosa nasconde in realtà la sua metafora? Per rispondere a tali interrogativi e per vagliare l'ideologia soggiacente al discorso politico cinese contemporaneo, uno dei più interessanti livelli di analisi è quello rappresentato dal linguaggio figurato, in particolare, la metafora. Alla luce degli importanti contributi di Lakoff e Johnson (1980), l'indagine sul significato del 'sogno cinese' è condotta attraverso l'analisi e l'interpretazione delle metafore concettuali adottate da Xi Jinping in due discorsi in cui ne argomenta il valore. Nelle mani dei leader politici, la metafora rappresenta uno fra i più potenti strumenti di persuasione, per tale ragione, un suo attento esame costituisce un significativo metodo di indagine per la comprensione delle strategie retoriche messe in atto dall'attuale dirigenza cinese e gli obiettivi che si prefigge di raggiungere.

## 1 Introduzione

L'attuale segretario generale del Partito Comunista Cinese (PCC) e presidente della Repubblica Popolare Cinese (RPC), Xi Jinping, ha fatto riferimento al concetto di 'sogno cinese' per la prima volta il 29 novembre 2012, presso il Museo Nazionale di Pechino. La mostra in corso, intitolata *Fùxīng zhī lù* 复兴之路 (La strada verso la rinascita<sup>1</sup>), ripercorreva la storia della Cina dal periodo della sua 'umiliazione' per mano delle potenze straniere, all'indipendenza raggiunta grazie al ruolo guida del Partito. In tale occasione, Xi ha affermato:

现在，大家都在讨论中国梦，我以为，实现中华民族伟大复兴，就是中华民族近代以来最伟大的梦想。这个梦想，凝聚了几代中国人的夙愿，体现了中华民族和中国人民的整体利益，是每一个中华儿女的共同期盼。

Oggigiorno tutti parlano del sogno cinese, io ritengo che il più grande sogno della nazione cinese sia proprio realizzare la sua rinascita. Questo sogno condensa i desideri a lungo covati da generazioni di cinesi, incar-

1 La parola *fùxīng* 复兴 è in genere tradotta come 'rinnovamento', 'ringiovanimento' o 'rinascimento', ma il dibattito sulla sua traduzione è tuttora in corso (Scarpari 2013b, p. 14; 2015b, p. 44). Si è scelto in questa sede di non utilizzare i suddetti termini poiché 'rinascimento' appare eccessivamente legato alla storia e alla cultura occidentale, mentre 'ringiovanimento' si presenta come un calco dall'inglese *rejuvenation*, così come 'rinnovamento', non pare adeguato a restituire il denso carico semantico di *fùxīng*. È stato scelto il termine 'rinascita' che sembra essere più consono al contesto ideologico del *zhōnghuá mínzú de wěidà fùxīng* 中华民族的伟大复兴 (la grande rinascita della nazione cinese).

na tutti gli interessi del popolo cinese e della nazione cinese: il sogno cinese è la speranza comune a ciascun figlio della Cina. (Xi Jinping 2012)

Il 'sogno cinese', come esposto in questo discorso e nei successivi, consiste, dunque, nel realizzare la grande rinascita (*fùxīng* 复兴) della nazione cinese. Il termine *fùxīng* si compone dei morfemi *fù* 复 e *xīng* 兴, il primo significa 'ritornare-ripetere', il secondo 'sorgere, entusiasmo, vigore', l'espressione 'grande rinascita della nazione cinese' esprime, quindi, il concetto di un entusiasmo, di un vigore che è già stato proprio della nazione cinese e che sta per far ritorno. Tuttavia, non ci è dato sapere cosa comporterà nel concreto la realizzazione della 'grande rinascita della nazione cinese'.

Sebbene le connotazioni del 'sogno cinese' siano estremamente vaghe e poco delineate, esso è di grande impatto mediatico e segna un ulteriore passo in avanti della retorica politica cinese. Se, infatti, per dare un'identità a un popolo travolto da cambiamenti epocali, già Hu Jintao aveva mutuato per i suoi slogan termini e concetti dal mondo confuciano, il discorso sul 'sogno cinese' ingloba e supera anche questo. Esso prosegue nella direzione intrapresa dalla retorica della precedente generazione di leader con esplicito richiamo alla cultura tradizionale e ne rappresenta, allo stesso tempo, una celebrazione. Nel 'sogno cinese' vi è l'esaltazione della 'cinesità' e della fierezza di far parte di un popolo che per millenni si è considerato al centro del mondo.

Rimane ancora da chiarire quale sia la ragione che muove l'attuale dirigenza a mettere in atto tali strategie. Di certo, anche se la Cina odierna è uscita ufficialmente dal terzo mondo riuscendo a ridurre drasticamente il tasso di povertà, resta ancora molto da fare sia sullo scacchiere internazionale che in politica interna, in primo luogo garantire la stabilità. Proprio a tale compito vuole assolvere il 'sogno cinese': ideato dalla classe politica con il fine di coagulare i sogni dei singoli individui, si prefigge di colmare il vuoto ideologico, morale ed etico presente nella Cina di oggi, dove, a seguito delle profonde trasformazioni sociali, è venuto meno «un collante, un'ideologia dominante che ha sorretto il PCC storicamente» (Scarpari 2013c). Questo individua il filo conduttore che lega tra loro le diverse espressioni metaforiche di tutta l'indagine in oggetto. Stimolare la coesione nazionale rappresenta la macro-funzione di tutte le strategie retoriche messe in atto. A muovere nella direzione di questo obiettivo non è tanto un sentimento filantropico, quanto la consapevolezza da parte della dirigenza nei confronti della funzione strumentale che può svolgere: il PCC solo facendosi interprete della realtà odierna, può mantenersi a capo della transizione che vede la Repubblica Popolare Cinese diventare un «moderno Paese socialista che sia ricco, forte, dalla cultura democratica e armonioso» (Xi Jinping 2013b).

## 2 Metodologia

Per esaminare il linguaggio figurato utilizzato da Xi Jinping nell'espone il concetto di 'sogno cinese', sono stati analizzati la prolusione tenuta il 17 marzo 2013 nel corso della XII Assemblea Nazionale Popolare (ANP) e il discorso pronunciato il 4 maggio 2013 presso l'Accademia della tecnologia spaziale di Pechino in occasione dell'anniversario del Movimento del Quattro Maggio. I due discorsi sono stati esaminati singolarmente, alla luce della nozione di metafora concettuale (Lakoff, Johnson 1980) e prendendo spunto dal lavoro di Magagnin (2014). L'analisi si struttura nelle fasi di identificazione, interpretazione e spiegazione, sulla base del metodo d'indagine proposto da Charteris-Black (2004). Nello specifico, un'attenta lettura ha permesso di individuare le espressioni linguistiche usate in chiave metaforica, il cui numero di occorrenze è indicato tra parentesi, e di raggrupparle nei loro domini concettuali. A questa prima fase segue quella dell'interpretazione, con il riconoscimento delle metafore concettuali, e infine quella della spiegazione, che consiste nell'individuare la funzione delle associazioni metaforiche nel contesto del discorso.

I domini concettuali usati in chiave metaforica verranno analizzati separatamente, poiché ciascuno di essi ha il compito di mettere in luce specifici aspetti. Al termine dell'analisi di entrambi i discorsi verrà proposta una valutazione complessiva delle metafore adottate per strutturare il concetto di 'sogno cinese', anche facendo riferimento alla distinzione tra *P-Ideology* e *S-Ideology* proposta da Hodge e Louie (1999).

## 3 Analisi del linguaggio metaforico della prolusione tenuta in occasione della ANP

Le espressioni linguistiche metaforiche individuate nella prolusione tenuta in occasione della XII ANP sono classificate nel modo seguente:

Casa/famiglia: *dài* 代 (generazione) (3); *jiāyuán* 家园 (giardino di casa) (1); *dāngjiā zuòzhǔ* 当家作主 (essere il padrone a casa propria) (1); *tóngbāo* 同胞 (compatriota) (5); *qiáobāo* 侨胞 (compatriota residente all'estero) (1).  
 Viaggio/strada: *zǒu* 走 (percorre) (8); *qiánjìn* 前进 (avanzare) (4); *jiǎnnán xiǎnzǔ* 艰难险阻 (difficoltà e ostacoli) (1); *fèn yǒng qián jìn* 奋勇前进 (avanzare arditamente) (1); *jìnbù* 进步 (fare passi in avanti) (4); *jīngguò* 经过 (attraversare) (1); *guàncuān* 贯穿 (attraversare da un capo all'altro) (1); *tūixiǎng* 推向 (avanzare) (1); *dàolù* 道路 (strada) (8); *lái zhī bù yì* 来之不易 (ottenuto con fatica); *yánzhe* 沿着 (seguire) (1); *jìn* 进 (entrare) (1); *màixiàng* 迈向 (avanzare) (1); *tūjìn* 推进 (avanzare) (4); *cháozhe* 朝着 (avanzare) (1); *fāngxiàng* 方向 (direzione) (1); *wěn bù* 稳步 (passo stabile) (1); *chǔ yú* 处于 (trovarsi) (2); *rènzhòng ér dào yuǎn* 任重而道远

- (pesante onere e lunga strada) (1); *cùjìn* 促进 (avanzare, accelerare) (4); *qiánchéng* 前程 (percorso di fronte) (1); *yī wǎng wú qián* 一往无前 (avanzare intrepidamente) (1); *xīn wǎng yīchù xiǎng, jìn wǎng yīchù shǐ* 心往一处想, 劲往一处使 (i cuori procedono verso lo stesso desiderio, gli sforzi procedono verso un'unica missione) (1).
- Guerra: *fèndòu* 奋斗 (combattere) (8); *zhànshèng* 战胜 (sconfiggere) (2); *jiānshǒu* 坚守 (resistere) (1); *zhànlüè* 战略 (strategia) (2); *tǒngyī zhànxiàn* 统一战线 (fronte unito) (1); *zhǔlìjūn* 主力军 (corpo principale dell'esercito) (1); *shēnglìjūn* 生力军 (nuove leve dell'esercito) (1); *wéihù* 维护 (proteggere) (2); *gāojǔ... qízhì* 高举.....旗帜 (issare la bandiera) (1); *dòuzhēng* 斗争 (lottare, lotta) (1); *duóqǔ... shènglì* 夺取.....胜利 (conquistare vittorie) (1).
- Essere vivente: *jǔshì zhǔmù* 举世瞩目 (attirare lo sguardo del mondo) (1); *zītài* 姿态 (atteggiamento) (1); *jīngshen* 精神 (spirito) (15); *níng xīn jù lì* 凝心聚力 (coagulare le forze fisiche e mentali) (1); *hún* 魂 (anima) (2); *lìliang* 力量 (forza) (9); *chéngzhǎng* 成长 (crescere) (1); *jiāqiáng* 加强 (rafforzare) (2); *xié qǐ shǒu lái* 携起手来 (unire le mani) (1); *guānxīn* 关心 (avere a cuore) (1).
- Costruzioni: *jiànli* 建立 (fondare) (1); *chuàngzào* 创造 (creare) (7); *jiànchéng* 建成 (costruire) (3); *jīchǔ* 基础 (fondamenta) (3); *tuòzhǎn* 拓展 (espandere, estendere) (1); *jīcéng* 基层 (livello base) (1); *jiànshēn* 建设 (costruire) (10); *jībēn* 基本 (fondamenta) (1); *hāngshí* 夯实 (compattare, in riferimento al terreno) (1); *gǒnggù* 巩固 (consolidare, solido) (2); *jiànshēnzhě* 建设者 (costruttori) (1); *lì dǎng wèi gōng* 立党为公 (fondare il partito per il benessere comune) (1).
- Natura:<sup>2</sup> *yìlì* 屹立 (ergersi) (1); *cāng sāng* 沧桑 (abbr. di *cāng hǎi sāng tián* 沧海桑田 oceano azzurro e campi di gelsi) (1); *péiyù* 培育 (coltivare) (1); *bǎo* 葆 (mantenere vivo) (1); *cháoqì* 朝气 (brezza del mattino) (1); *péngbó* 蓬勃 (fiorire) (1); *gēnběn* 根本 (radice) (2); *chéngguǒ* 成果 (frutti) (1); *fánróng* 繁荣 (fiorire) (1); *hào hào dàng dàng* 浩浩荡荡 (ondeggiare in modo impetuoso) (1); *cháo liú* 潮流 (marea) (1); *yuānyuán* 渊源 (sorgente) (1).
- Macchina: *dònglì* 动力 (forza motrice) (1); *diàodòng* 调动 (mettere in moto) (1); *tuīdòng* 推动 (mettere in moto) (2).

### 3.1 La metafora della famiglia

Sin dall'inizio della prolusione è possibile riscontrare alcuni dei domini concettuali sopra elencati e, tra questi, quello relativo all'ambito familiare. Dopo il giuramento e i dovuti ringraziamenti di fronte all'ANP, Xi Jinping ripercorre la storia della RPC leggendola in chiave generazionale:

<sup>2</sup> Sebbene in diversi studi, che analizzano il linguaggio figurato dal punto di vista delle metafore concettuali, i domini 'pianta' e 'fluire dell'acqua' siano generalmente tenuti separati, si è deciso, per comodità, di farli convergere nell'unica categoria 'natura', cui entrambi appartengono.

在以毛泽东同志为核心的党的第一代中央领导集体、以邓小平同志为核心的党的第二代中央领导集体、以江泽民同志为核心的党的第三代中央领导集体、以胡锦涛同志为总书记的党中央领导下，全国各族人民戮力同心、接力奋斗，战胜前进道路上的各种艰难险阻，取得了举世瞩目的辉煌成就。

Sotto la guida della prima generazione di collettivo dirigente centrale, con il compagno Mao Zedong quale nucleo; sotto la guida della seconda generazione di collettivo dirigente centrale, con il compagno Deng Xiaoping quale nucleo; sotto la guida della terza generazione di collettivo dirigente centrale con il compagno Jiang Zemin quale nucleo e sotto la guida del Comitato Centrale con il compagno Hu Jintao in qualità di segretario generale, il popolo di tutte le etnie del Paese ha combattuto a forze unite e di concerto, ha sconfitto tutti i difficili ostacoli che ha incontrato lungo il cammino, raggiungendo i brillanti risultati che hanno attirato lo sguardo di tutto il mondo.

Alle espressioni *dìyīdài* 第一代 (prima generazione), *dìèrdài* 第二代 (seconda generazione) e *dīsāndài* 第三代 (terza generazione) soggiace la metafora concettuale IL PARTITO È UNA FAMIGLIA, la quale assolve al compito di presentare il PCC come un partito compatto, i cui membri sono strettamente legati tra loro così come i componenti di una famiglia. Questa è l'immagine che il PCC vuole dare di sé all'ANP e, per estensione, a tutto il Paese: solo dimostrandosi compatto e coeso al suo interno, può rivelarsi forte all'esterno.

Inoltre, si potrebbe opinare che questa associazione metaforica assolve a una seconda funzione: legittimare il ruolo di Xi Jinping. Sebbene non ci sia un esplicito riferimento alla generazione attuale di leader, il Presidente, ripercorrendo la 'genealogia della famiglia' del PCC, si auto-designa 'erede' di questa 'stirpe'.

Le espressioni linguistiche metaforiche connesse all'ambito familiare non si limitano alla suddetta metafora, ma sono anche espressione di LA NAZIONE È UNA FAMIGLIA. Questa associazione metaforica ricorre nel discorso politico di tutto il mondo, poiché si presta a stimolare la coesione sociale facendo leva sulla sfera emotiva. Nella cultura cinese, però, appare essere particolarmente saliente. Essa affonda le sue radici nel pensiero confuciano, secondo cui la famiglia costituisce il modello per costruire la società umana. In questa prolusione del 2013 tale metafora trova espressione nel passo seguente:

把我国 56 个民族、13 亿多人紧紧凝聚在一起的，[...] 是我们共同创造的美好家园。

La salda unione che lega cinquantasei etnie e oltre un miliardo trecento milioni di persone nel nostro Paese, [...] rappresenta la meravigliosa casa che insieme abbiamo costruito.

Se il termine *jiāyuán* 家园 (giardino di casa) ha già di per sé ha una carica semantica ben determinata, qui è ulteriormente rafforzato dall'uso del pronome *wǒmen* 我们 (noi), che comprende sia lo *speaker*, Xi Jinping e il Partito di cui egli è rappresentante; sia gli astanti, ovvero i delegati dell'ANP e, quindi, tutto il popolo cinese nel suo complesso. L'immagine metaforica è quella di una 'grande casa', ossia il territorio della RPC, costruita da un'unica grande famiglia. E ancora:

我们要坚持党的领导、人民当家作主、依法治国有機统一。

Noi dobbiamo mantenere l'integrazione organica del ruolo guida del Partito, del dominio assoluto del popolo e dell'amministrazione dello Stato in conformità con la legge.

Il *rénmín* 人民 (popolo) viene identificato con il padrone di casa attraverso il sintagma a quattro caratteri *dāngjiā zuòzhǔ* 当家作主 (essere il padrone a casa propria). La posizione di rilievo conferita al popolo non è una prerogativa del linguaggio dell'attuale dirigenza, ma la si ritrova nell'intero discorso politico cinese. A tal proposito, si ricordi lo slogan di epoca maoista *wéi rénmin fúwù* 为人民服务 (servire il popolo), che viene ripreso in questo discorso del 2013 in due occasioni. La prima è durante il giuramento iniziale del neoletto presidente Xi Jinping, il quale afferma:

我将 [...] 为民服务。

Io [...] sarò a servizio del popolo.

La seconda è nella proposizione che segue, nella quale è stato omissso il termine *rénmín* 人民 (popolo):

建设服务政府、责任政府、法治政府、廉洁政府。

Dobbiamo costruire un governo al servizio del popolo, responsabile, che si attenga alle leggi e che sia integro.

Nella sezione conclusiva della prolusione Xi Jinping ribadisce ulteriormente l'importanza del popolo:

全体共产党员特别是党的领导干部, [...] 始终把人民放在心中最高的位置。

Tutti i membri del Partito, in particolare i quadri dirigenti, [...] devono sempre porre il popolo al primo posto.

In questo caso, risulta evidente come sia stato scelto un linguaggio evocativo per ribadire ancora una volta la centralità del popolo. Quest'ultimo è il complemento oggetto del verbo *fàng* 放 (collocare) e viene quindi compreso nei termini di un oggetto che deve essere posto all'interno del *xīn* 心 (mente-cuore). In particolare, nella cultura cinese *xīn* 心 rappresenta allo stesso tempo il cuore, la mente e lo spirito dell'uomo, poiché esso è non solo la sede dei desideri, dei sentimenti e delle emozioni, ma anche dell'intelligenza, dei pensieri e della volontà.

Infine, la metafora concettuale LA NAZIONE È UNA FAMIGLIA è ripresa quando Xi si rivolge alle zone amministrative speciali di Hong Kong e Macao, e affronta la questione di Taiwan:

香港特别行政区同胞、澳门特别行政区同胞，要以国家和香港、澳门整体利益为重，共同维护和促进香港、澳门长期繁荣稳定。广大台湾同胞和大陆同胞要携起手来，支持、维护、推动两岸关系和平发展，增进两岸同胞福祉，共同开创中华民族新的前程。广大海外侨胞，要弘扬中华民族勤劳善良的优良传统，努力为促进祖国发展、促进中国人民同当地人民的友谊作出贡献。

I compatrioti delle zone amministrative speciali di Hong Kong e Macao, devono dare primaria importanza agli interessi che sono comuni al Paese e a Hong Kong e Macao, devono salvaguardare e promuovere a lungo e insieme la prosperità e la stabilità di Hong Kong e Macao. Le masse di compatrioti di Taiwan e quelli della Cina continentale devono congiungere le loro mani, devono sostenere, salvaguardare e promuovere lo sviluppo pacifico delle relazioni fra le due sponde dello stretto, devono accrescere la felicità dei compatrioti delle due rive e costruire insieme un nuovo futuro della nazione cinese. Le masse di compatrioti d'oltreoceano devono onorare la buona tradizione di operosità e cortesia propria della nazione cinese, devono contribuire con impegno al progresso della madrepatria e all'amicizia tra il popolo cinese e quello locale.

I termini *tóngbāo* 同胞 (compatriota) e *qiáobāo* 侨胞 (compatriota all'estero) sono espressioni linguistiche relative all'ambiente familiare. Tuttavia, la traduzione italiana di 'compatriota'<sup>3</sup> neutralizza la metafora e quindi, per comprenderla, occorre osservare la composizione morfemica: sia *tóngbāo* che *qiáobāo* sono formati dal morfema *bāo* 胞 (placenta), che conferisce a entrambi i termini il significato di 'coloro che sono nati dallo stesso ventre'. Tali espressioni, dunque, hanno la funzione di sottolineare il rapporto di fratellanza che lega tutti i cinesi e altresì quelli che risiedono fuori dai confini della RPC.

3 Il termine 'compatriota' deriva dalla parola latina *compatriota*, che è un calco dal greco συμπατριώτης, composto da συσ- (con) e πατριώτης (dello stesso paese) e, quindi, esprime il senso di coloro che provengono dalla medesima patria. Cfr. Dizionario online Treccani, disponibile all'indirizzo <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/tag/compatriota/> (2014-06-16).

È interessante mettere in evidenza come nel caso di Taiwan, dove non è stata ancora portata a termine 'la missione di unificare la madrepatria', la necessità di ricongiungere l'isola con la Cina continentale sia esplicitata dall'immagine metaforica di due mani che si uniscono, cui fa riferimento l'espressione linguistica *xié qǐ shǒu lái* 携起手来 (congiungere le mani). Allo stesso modo, l'uso della metonimia *liǎng ān* 两岸 (le due coste), usata per indicare Taiwan e la RPC, vuole sottolinearne la vicinanza.

### 3.2 La metafora della strada

Anche la metafora della strada si riscontra sin dall'inizio della prolusione, in particolare, essa è stata utilizzata per introdurre il riferimento alla storia della RPC:

中华人民共和国走过了光辉的历程。

La Repubblica Popolare Cinese ha percorso un cammino glorioso.

I termini *zǒu* 走 (percorrere) e *lìchéng* 历程 (percorso) appartengono al dominio concettuale della strada ed esplicitano la metafora LA STORIA DELLA RPC È UNA STRADA. In virtù del processo di personificazione, la RPC rappresenta il soggetto dell'azione di 'percorre il cammino'. Mentre, allorché si vuole enfatizzare che lungo la strada ci sono stati degli ostacoli, il soggetto dell'azione viene esplicitato:

全国各族人民 [...] 战胜前进道路上的各种艰难险阻。

Il popolo di tutte le etnie del Paese [...] ha sconfitto tutti i difficili ostacoli che ha incontrato lungo il cammino.

Più avanti nel discorso, il concetto di 'socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi' viene strutturato nei termini di una strada, come evidenziato dalle parole che seguono:

实现中国梦必须走中国道路。这就是中国特色社会主义道路。这条道路来之不易，它是在改革开放 30 多年的伟大实践中走出来的，是在中华人民共和国成立 60 多年的持续探索中走出来的，是在对近代以来 170 多年中华民族发展历程的深刻总结中走出来的，是在对中华民族 5000 多年悠久文明的传承中走出来的，具有深厚的历史渊源和广泛的现实基础。中华民族是具有非凡创造力的民族，我们创造了伟大的中华文明，我们也能够继续拓展和走好适合中国国情的发展道路。全国各族人民一定要增强对中国特色社会主义的理论自信、道路自信、制度自信，坚定不移沿着正确的中国道路奋勇前进。



Per realizzare il sogno cinese è necessario procedere lungo la strada cinese, che è appunto la strada del socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi. Questa strada è stata trovata con fatica, essa emerge dagli oltre trent'anni di grandiosa attuazione della politica di riforme e apertura, emerge dalla continua ricerca condotta in oltre sessant'anni dalla fondazione della Repubblica Popolare Cinese, emerge dalla profonda sintesi del processo di sviluppo che la nazione cinese ha avuto negli ultimi centosettanta anni, emerge dall'eredità lasciataci dagli oltre cinquemila anni di lunga civiltà cinese. Questa strada ha una profonda origine storica e vaste fondamenta odierne. La nazione cinese è una nazione che possiede una straordinaria forza creativa, noi abbiamo creato la grandiosa civiltà cinese e siamo anche capaci di continuare a procedere e ad espandere una strada di sviluppo che sia in accordo con la condizione della Cina. Il popolo di tutti i gruppi etnici del Paese di certo deve rafforzare la sua fiducia nella teoria della costruzione del socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi, nella strada da seguire e nelle istituzioni, deve avanzare arditamente e senza esitazione lungo la giusta strada cinese.

Il sintagma *láizhībùyì* 来之不易 (ottenuto con fatica), composto dal morfema *lái* 来 (venire), e le espressioni *zǒu* 走 (percorrere), *dàolù* 道路 (strada), *zǒu chū lái* 走出来 (procedere verso fuori), *yánzhe* 沿着 (seguire) e *qiánjìn* 前进 (avanzare) sono tutte relative al dominio concettuale della strada e ad esse soggiace la metafora IL SOCIALISMO CON CARATTERISTICHE CINESI È UNA STRADA. Risulta interessante notare come, in questo estratto, *dàolù* 道路 (strada) si trasforma da oggetto dell'azione a soggetto: nelle prime due proposizioni il termine *dàolù* (strada) fa riferimento al percorso da seguire per realizzare il 'sogno cinese' e il soggetto dell'azione potrebbe essere riconosciuto nel sottointeso *wǒmen* 我们 (noi). Invece, nelle proposizioni in cui viene chiarita l'origine della 'strada' del 'socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi', *dàolù* (strada) diviene soggetto attraverso il processo cognitivo di personificazione ed è, così, in grado di *lái* 来 (venire) e *zǒu chū lái* 走出来 (procedere verso fuori), senza la presenza di un qualsiasi elemento che la percorra. Si potrebbe opinare che la scelta di rendere la 'strada' un soggetto abbia l'obiettivo di sottolineare come il 'socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi' sia la conseguenza naturale del processo storico, culturale e sociale che la Cina ha avuto lungo tutto l'arco della sua storia e che, quindi, sia di fatto l'unica 'strada' possibile da percorrere e non semplicemente una scelta del Partito.

Nella sezione conclusiva dell'estratto sopra citato, la 'strada' torna ad essere oggetto dell'azione compiuta dal soggetto *wǒmen* 我们 (noi) che, come già esplicitato, comprende sia lo *speaker* sia gli astanti e, quindi, tutto il popolo cinese nel suo complesso. La necessità di convogliare tutto il popolo cinese verso un'unica meta è chiarita nell'esortazione conclusiva del passo di cui sopra: «Il popolo di tutti i gruppi etnici del Paese [...] deve avanzare arditamente e senza esitazione lungo la giusta strada cinese».

In seguito, questa necessità viene ulteriormente messa in rilievo dall'uso del sintagma *wànzhòng yīxīn* 万众一心 (milioni di persone con un solo cuore) e dalle due proposizioni classicheggianti e parallele: *xīn wǎng yīchù xiǎng, jìn wǎng yīchù shǐ* 心往一处想, 劲往一处使 (i cuori procedono verso lo stesso desiderio, gli sforzi procedono verso un'unica missione). In quest'ultimo caso, sono presenti le due espressioni *wǎng* 往 (andare) e *chù* 处 (luogo) relative al dominio concettuale del viaggio e i due termini *xīn* 心 (mente-cuore) e *jìn* 劲 (sforzo, impegno) che hanno lo scopo di fare leva sulla sfera emotiva.

Viene, inoltre, riaffermato il concetto di 'stadio primario del socialismo', visto metaforicamente come una tappa obbligatoria lungo la strada che porta a realizzare il 'sogno cinese':

我国仍处于并将长期处于社会主义初级阶段，实现中国梦，创造全体人民更加美好的生活，任重而道远，需要我们每一个人继续付出辛勤劳动和艰苦努力。

Il nostro Paese si trova ancora e si troverà a lungo nello stadio primario del socialismo, il pesante onere e la lunga strada che porta ad avverare il sogno cinese e a migliorare ulteriormente il tenore di vita del popolo intero, necessitano che ognuno di noi continui a lavorare duramente e a impegnarsi a denti stretti.

In questo estratto le espressioni metaforiche *chǔyú* 处于 (situarsi) e *dào yuǎn* 道远 (strada lunga) esplicitano le metafore REALIZZARE IL SOGNO CINESE È UNA STRADA e LO STADIO PRIMARIO DEL SOCIALISMO È LA TAPPA DI UNA STRADA. In riferimento allo 'stadio primario del socialismo', occorre mettere in luce come questo discorso non affronti la questione del quando questo stadio avrà termine per, invece, utilizzare questa 'tesi scientifica' solo come uno strumento di definizione dell'odierna struttura socio-economica cinese. Ciò che ha il compito di *zhǐdǎo* 指导 (guidare) è esemplificato dall'esortazione conclusiva:

以邓小平理论、“三个代表”重要思想、科学发展观为指导。

Considerate come guida la teoria di Deng Xiaoping, l'importante pensiero delle 'Tre Rappresentatività' e la visione di sviluppo scientifico.

Infine, il dominio concettuale della strada si presta a essere usato metaforicamente per strutturare la politica estera della RPC:

我们 [...] 始终不渝走和平发展道路。

Noi [...] instancabilmente proseguiremo lungo la strada per lo sviluppo della pace.

### 3.3 La metafora bellica

Le espressioni linguistiche legate al dominio bellico traggono origine dalla terminologia della guerriglia apparsa negli anni Quaranta e sono state, in seguito, utilizzate metaforicamente a partire dagli anni Cinquanta in relazione al progetto di costruire una nuova società di stampo socialista (Link 2013, pp. 251-252). In questo discorso del 2013, la metafora bellica è innanzitutto utilizzata per ripercorre la storia della RPC:

中华人民共和国走过了光辉的历程。在以毛泽东同志为核心的党的第一代中央领导集体、以邓小平同志为核心的党的第二代中央领导集体、以江泽民同志为核心的党的第三代中央领导集体、以胡锦涛同志为总书记的党中央领导下，全国各族人民戮力同心、接力奋斗。

La Repubblica Popolare Cinese ha percorso un cammino glorioso. Sotto la guida della prima generazione di collettivo dirigente centrale, con il compagno Mao Zedong quale nucleo; sotto la guida della seconda generazione di collettivo dirigente centrale, con il compagno Deng Xiaoping quale nucleo; sotto la guida della terza generazione di collettivo dirigente centrale con il compagno Jiang Zemin quale nucleo e sotto la guida del Comitato Centrale con il compagno Hu Jintao in qualità di segretario generale, il popolo di tutte le etnie del Paese ha combattuto a forze unite e di concerto.

All'espressione linguistica *fèndòu* 奋斗 (combattere, lottare) sottostà la metafora concettuale IL POPOLO È UN ESERCITO: il popolo cinese è descritto come un corpo d'armi che vede unite le forze dei suoi membri e che si sente motivato da uno stesso sentimento. A tale immagine fa riferimento sia il termine *jiēlì* 接力, formato da *jiē* 接 (unire, mettere insieme) e *lì* 力 (forze), che l'espressione linguistica a quattro caratteri *lù lì tóng xīn* 戮力同心, tradotta 'di concerto' e composta dai morfemi *lù* 戮 (unire), *lì* 力 (forze), *tóng* 同 (uguale, insieme) e *xīn* 心 (mente-cuore).

Occorre evidenziare come, in tutti i discorsi sul 'sogno cinese', Xi Jinping specifica che si tratta del popolo formato da tutte le etnie presenti nel territorio cinese. La necessità di mettere in risalto che il popolo è unico ed unito è ulteriormente enfatizzata dal passo che segue:

把我国 56 个民族、13 亿多人紧紧凝聚在一起的，是我们共同经历的非凡奋斗。

La salda unione che lega cinquantasei etnie e oltre un miliardo e trecento milioni di persone del nostro Paese, rappresenta la lotta eccezionale che insieme abbiamo portato avanti.

In questo caso, anche il pronome *wǒmen* 我们 (noi), soggetto dell'azione

di *fèndòu* 奋斗 (combattere, lottare), ha la funzione di convogliare tutte le etnie sotto un unico 'noi'. E ancora:

我们要巩固和发展最广泛的爱国统一战线。

Noi dobbiamo consolidare e potenziare il più vasto fronte unito del patriottismo.

La metafora bellica espressa nei termini *tǒngyī zhànxiàn* 统一战线 (fronte unito) richiama alla storia della Cina e, in particolare, alle due esperienze di fronte unito sorte dall'alleanza tra il PCC e il *Guómíndǎng* 国民党 (Partito Nazionalista): la prima risale al periodo compreso tra il 1923 e il 1926 e nasce dall'esigenza di combattere i 'signori della guerra';<sup>4</sup> la seconda sorge nel 1936 con l'obiettivo di contrastare l'invasione giapponese della Cina. In entrambe le occasioni l'alleanza è stata motivata dalla necessità di difendere la madrepatria e dal sentimento patriottico delle due parti. Tale sentimento è proprio ciò che si vuole stimolare: se, infatti, non vi è una guerra vera e propria, la metafora bellica è usata per rendere partecipi anche coloro che sono esterni al PCC e per convogliare tutti gli sforzi nella lotta contro un 'nemico' comune che, tuttavia, non viene specificato.

In un altro estratto, Xi Jinping si rivolge in particolar modo a quelle classi sociali che sono il fondamento dei partiti comunisti in tutto il mondo:

全国广大工人、农民、知识分子，要发挥聪明才智，勤奋工作，积极在经济社会发展中发挥主力军和生力军作用。

Le masse operaie, contadine e di intellettuali dell'intero Paese devono dispiegare il loro talento e il loro ingegno, devono lavorare con diligenza, devono essere le forze nuove e principali sul fronte dello sviluppo socio-economico.

Le espressioni *zhǔlìjūn* 主力军 (corpo principale di un esercito) e *shēnglìjūn* 生力军 (nuove leve dell'esercito) esplicitano, anch'esse, la metafora concettuale IL POPOLO È UN ESERCITO. Il popolo è descritto nei termini di un corpo d'armata chiamato a combattere per realizzare il 'sogno cinese'.

A questa metafora è connessa quella di REALIZZARE IL SOGNO CINESE È UNA GUERRA, la quale trova espressione nel passo che segue:

4 I 'signori della guerra' sono diversi capi militari, ex collaboratori di Yuan Shikai, i quali alla morte di quest'ultimo nel 1916 si contesero il controllo del governo di Pechino, che al tempo era privo di qualsiasi potere effettivo. Il periodo dei 'signori della guerra' copre il lasso di tempo compreso tra il 1916 e il 1928, e rappresenta uno dei periodi più cupi della storia cinese.

我们 [...] 继续为实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦而努力奋斗。

Noi [...] dobbiamo continuare a combattere con impegno per avverare il sogno cinese di grande rinascita della nazione cinese.

Così come una guerra è scandita da battaglie, anche la realizzazione del 'sogno cinese' si articola in 'obiettivi di lotta':

实现全面建成小康社会、建成富强民主文明和谐的社会主义现代化国家的奋斗目标，实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦，就是要实现国家富强、民族振兴、人民幸福。

Il sogno cinese di grande rinascita della nostra nazione e del duplice obiettivo di costruire la 'società del moderato benessere' e un moderno Paese socialista che sia ricco, forte, dalla cultura democratica e armonioso, ha lo scopo di rendere il Paese ricco e forte, la nazione rivitalizzata<sup>5</sup> e il popolo felice.

Il *fèndòu mùbiāo* 奋斗目标 (obiettivo di lotta) è ulteriormente chiarito in altri discorsi e, tra essi, quello tenuto in occasione della ricorrenza del Quattro Maggio (Xi Jinping 2013b), nel quale Xi Jinping precisa che si tratta di '*liǎnggè yī bǎi nián*' *fèndòu mùbiāo* 'duecentenni' 奋斗目标 (obiettivo di lotta 'i due centenari'). Tale espressione è usata per indicare la costruzione della *xiǎokāng shèhuì* 小康社会 (società del moderato benessere) da concretizzare entro il 2021 e la realizzazione nel 2049 del 'sogno cinese' di un moderno Paese socialista che sia ricco, forte, dalla cultura democratica e armonioso. Queste due date sono fondamentali per la storia della Cina in quanto la prima consiste nel centenario della costituzione del PCC e la seconda rappresenta il centenario della fondazione della RPC.

Per ciò che concerne la 'società del moderato benessere', occorre evidenziare che tale concetto appartiene alla tradizione confuciana e indica la fase intermedia necessaria alla realizzazione del *dàtóng* 大同 (Grande Unità). Nonostante il concetto di 'società del moderato benessere' avesse un'accezione negativa nel pensiero di Confucio, è stato rivalutato di recente dalla classe politica cinese (Scarpari 2013a, pp. XXIX-XXX).

Con riferimento, invece, alla costruzione di un 'moderno Paese socialista che sia ricco, forte, dalla cultura democratica e armonioso', è interessante porre in evidenza i determinanti del sostantivo *guójiā* 国家 (Paese), poiché alcuni di essi sembrano riferirsi agli slogan dei leader precedenti: il con-

5 Il termine cinese, qui tradotto 'rivitalizzare', è *zhènxīng* 振兴, composto dai morfemi *zhèn* 振 (scuotere) e *xīng* 兴 (sorgere, entusiasmo, vigore), quest'ultimo presente anche in *fùxīng* 复兴 (rinascita). Da ciò è possibile dedurre che i due termini, *zhènxīng* (rivitalizzare) e *fùxīng* (rinascita), sono strettamente connessi tra loro e opinare che il concetto espresso da *zhènxīng* sia quello di una 'riscossa' della nazione cinese.

chetto di *xiàndàihuà* 现代化 (modernizzazioni) è qui tradotto con l'aggettivo 'moderno' e potrebbe essere un richiamo allo slogan dell'epoca di Deng *sìgè xiàndàihuà* 四个现代化 (quattro modernizzazioni). Allo stesso modo, *héxié* 和谐 (armonioso) si riferisce al concetto di *héxié shèhuì* 和谐社会 (società armoniosa) ripreso da Hu Jintao. Questi appaiono i presupposti per «rendere il Paese ricco e forte, la nazione rivitalizzata e il popolo felice», come esplicitato nell'estratto di cui sopra.

La rilevanza della metafora bellica che soggiace alle relative espressioni linguistiche è ribadita anche nell'esortazione conclusiva:

全国各党派、各团体、各民族、各阶层、各界人士要 [...] 不断夺取全面建成小康社会、加快推进社会主义现代化新的更大的胜利。

Partiti, organizzazioni, etnie, strati sociali, personalità di tutti i circoli dell'intero Paese, [...] continuate a impegnarvi per ottenere vittorie nuove e ancor più grandi nel processo di costruzione della 'società del moderato benessere' onnicomprensiva e di accelerazione e impulso alla modernizzazione socialista.

Come si può notare in questo passo, alle espressioni linguistiche legate al dominio bellico sopra citate si aggiunge *duóqǔ... xīn de gēngdà de shènglì* 夺取.....新的更大的胜利 (conquistare nuove e ancor più grandi vittorie). Alla guerra per realizzare il 'sogno cinese' se ne affianca un'altra:

全体共产党员特别是党的领导干部，要 [...] 坚决同一切消极腐败现象作斗争。

Tutti i membri del Partito, in particolare i quadri dirigenti, devono [...] combattere duramente tutti i negativi fenomeni di corruzione.

La lotta alla corruzione è la guerra che l'attuale dirigenza ha fatto sua sin dal momento in cui ha assunto l'incarico di guidare il Paese. La corruzione è una delle principali piaghe della società cinese odierna ed è allo stesso tempo uno dei principali motivi di dissenso del popolo nei confronti della leadership.

In questo caso il nemico è chiaramente indicato: *Yīqiè xiāojí fǔbài xiànxiàng* 一切消极腐败现象 (tutti i negativi fenomeni di corruzione) sono descritti nei termini di un essere vivente introdotto dalla preposizione *tóng* 同 (insieme, uguale) che in funzione preposizionale è utilizzata per esprimere compagnia o il ricevente dell'azione,<sup>6</sup> da qui ne deriva che la metafora concettuale soggiacente alla succitata proposizione è LA CORRU-

6 A queste due funzioni, si aggiunge quella di introdurre il termine di paragone in presenza di comparazioni di eguaglianza.

ZIONE È UN NEMICO. Per di più, occorre sottolineare la scelta della terminologia: solo nel caso della corruzione si è adottato il termine *dòuzhēng* 斗争 (lottare, lotta) in qualità di complemento oggetto dell'azione *zuò* 作 (svolgere); mentre, in tutti gli altri casi in cui compare la metafora bellica in relazione al 'sogno cinese', il termine utilizzato è *fèndòu* 奋斗 (combattere, lottare) e la struttura sintattica è in genere *wèi... ér fèndòu* 为.....而奋斗, dove *wèi* 为 regge lo scopo dell'azione introdotta da *ér* 而. Dal punto di vista morfemico i termini *dòuzhēng* (lottare, lotta) e *fèndòu* (lottare, combattere) si differenziano per un unico morfema: *zhēng* 争 (disputare), che compone *dòuzhēng* 斗争, e *fèn* 奋 (sforzarsi), riscontrabile in *fèndòu* 奋斗. Da ciò è possibile dedurre che la diversa articolazione della proposizione e la scelta di utilizzare due diversi termini ha il compito di enfatizzare la natura dissimile di queste due guerre: la prima è una guerra che si potrebbe definire quasi reale, nella quale viene esplicitato il nemico e la vittoria determina la sopravvivenza del Partito; mentre la seconda è una guerra fittizia che ha il compito di coagulare gli sforzi della popolazione verso un unico obiettivo, così come suggerito dal morfema *fèn* 奋 (sforzarsi) e dalla struttura *wèi... ér fèndòu* 为.....而奋斗.

### 3.4 La metafora delle costruzioni

Nella sua prima applicazione il dominio concettuale delle costruzioni si intreccia con quello della strada: la 'strada' del 'socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi' è, difatti, concepita come una costruzione, sicché alla metafora IL SOCIALISMO CON CARATTERISTICHE CINESI È UNA STRADA, si affianca IL SOCIALISMO CON CARATTERISTICHE CINESI È UNA COSTRUZIONE. Analizziamo il seguente estratto:

实现中国梦必须走中国道路。这就是中国特色社会主义道路。这条道路 [...] 具有深厚的历史渊源和广泛的现实基础。中华民族是具有非凡创造力的民族，我们创造了伟大的中华文明，我们也能够继续拓展和走好适合中国国情的发展道路。

Per realizzare il sogno cinese è necessario procedere lungo la strada cinese. Essa consiste proprio nella strada del socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi. Questa strada [...] ha una profonda origine storica e vaste fondamenta odierne. La nazione cinese è una nazione che possiede una straordinaria forza creativa, noi abbiamo creato la grandiosa civiltà cinese e siamo anche capaci di continuare a procedere e a espandere una strada di sviluppo che sia in accordo con la condizione della Cina.

Da questo passo si evince che, nel parlare del 'socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi', Xi vuole sottolineare il lavoro messo in atto fino ad oggi dalla leadership congiuntamente al popolo, cooperazione che ha permesso di

raggiungere il grado di sviluppo odierno. L'accostamento delle suddette metafore ha l'obiettivo di rafforzare l'idea secondo la quale non è sufficiente procedere lungo la 'strada del socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi', ma è necessario, altresì, impegnarsi ed essere propositivi nel farlo. Questa potrebbe essere la chiave di lettura delle due espressioni metaforiche *jīchǔ* 基础 (fondamenta) e *tuòzhǎn* 拓展 (espandere) concernenti la metafora IL SOCIALISMO CON CARATTERISTICHE CINESI È UNA COSTRUZIONE, la quale induce a concepire il 'socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi', non solo come una 'strada' da percorrere, ma anche come un'opera edilizia da realizzare.

L'esposizione del concetto di 'socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi' nei termini di una costruzione è nuovamente ripresa nella seguente sezione del discorso:

一切非公有制经济人士和其他新的社会阶层人士，要 [...] 做合格的中国特色社会主义事业的建设者。

Tutte le personalità esterne alla sfera dell'economica pubblica e tutti gli appartenenti ai nuovi strati sociali [...] devono essere abili costruttori dell'impresa del socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi.

L'enfasi è qui posta su *fēi gōngyǒuzhì jīngjì rénrénshì hé qítā xīn de shèhuì jīcáng rénrénshì* 非公有制经济人士和其他新的社会阶层人士 (le personalità esterne alla sfera dell'economica pubblica e quelle appartenenti ai nuovi strati sociali) e l'espressione metaforica *jiànshè zhě* 建设者 (costruttori) si riferisce proprio a loro.

Osservando la scelta terminologica di questo estratto, è opportuno sottolineare l'uso del termine *jiēcéng* 阶层 (strati sociali), in luogo di *jiējí* 阶级 (classi sociali).<sup>7</sup> Di certo, il termine *jiēcéng* (strati sociali) è privo di connotazioni ideologiche ed è molto più neutro rispetto a *céng* (classi sociali). Inoltre, in considerazione della composizione morfemica dei due termini, questi si distinguono per un unico morfema, in altre parole *céng* 层 (livello) sostituisce *jí* 级 (gradino). Si potrebbe opinare che la scelta del termine *jiēcéng*, al comune *jiējí*, sia stata indotta dal fatto che quest'ultimo fa riferimento a una struttura sociale di tipo piramidale dove l'individuo può ascendere soltanto 'gradino per gradino', mentre *jiēcéng*, non possedendo questa accezione, si avvicina di più all'ideale di società socialista.

Oltre al concetto di 'socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi', la metafora della costruzione struttura anche quello di governo:

<sup>7</sup> Uno dei primi significativi usi del termine *jiēcéng* (strato sociale), in sostituzione di *jiējí* (classe sociale), è rintracciabile nel lungo discorso di Jiang Zemin tenuto nel 2001, in occasione dell'ottantesimo anniversario del Partito, in cui l'allora Presidente espose in modo articolato l'importante pensiero delle 'Tre rappresentatività'. Cfr. Jiang Zemin (2001).



我们要 [...] 建设服务政府、责任政府、法治政府、廉洁政府。

Noi [...] dobbiamo costruire un governo al servizio del popolo, responsabile, che si attenga alle leggi e che sia integro.

In questo caso, l'espressione linguistica *jiànshè* 建设 (costruire) fa riferimento alla metafora concettuale IL GOVERNO È UNA COSTRUZIONE, ma altrove essa è esternazione di IL PARTITO È UNA COSTRUZIONE, riscontrabile nella sezione conclusiva del discorso e precisamente:

必须坚持立党为公、执政为民，坚持党要管党、从严治党，全面加强党的建设。

Occorre persistere nel costruire un Partito che sia votato all'interesse del popolo e che governi per il popolo; mantenere un Partito che si autodisciplini e che sia rigoroso con i suoi membri; bisogna rafforzare in modo onnicomprensivo la costruzione del Partito.

Per rafforzare la suddetta metafora concettuale è stato utilizzato un sintagma composto da quattro caratteri *lì dǎng wèi gōng* 立党为公 (fondare il Partito per il benessere comune) nel quale *lì* 立 ha il significato di 'fondare', 'erigere', 'mettere in piedi'.

Infine, anche il 'sogno cinese' è strutturato nei termini di una costruzione:

我们要 [...] 不断夯实实现中国梦的物质文化基础。

Dobbiamo continuare a consolidare le basi culturali e materiali per realizzare il sogno cinese.

*Hāngshí* 夯实 (consolidare) e *jīchǔ* 基础 (fondamenta) appartengono entrambi al dominio concettuale delle costruzioni. Per quanto concerne il primo termine, *hāngshí* (consolidare), esso si compone dei morfemi *hāng* 夯 (compattare) e *shí* 实 (solido) e indica un'azione fondamentale per ogni opera di ingegneria edilizia, ossia il compattare fino a rendere solido il terreno. In merito a *jīchǔ* (fondamenta), è interessante porre risalto sui suoi determinanti: a *wùzhì* 物质 (materia, materiale) si affianca *wénhuà* 文化 (cultura). Da ciò si evince che, per 'costruire' il 'sogno cinese', Xi Jinping è consapevole dell'importanza dell'aspetto culturale e non solo di quello materiale.

### 3.5 La metafora della natura

In questa prolusione, la prima applicazione di un'espressione linguistica legata al dominio concettuale 'natura' è usata per comprendere e descrivere l'attuale posizione della RPC sullo scacchiere internazionale:

今天，我们的人民共和国正以昂扬的姿态屹立在世界东方。

Oggi, la nostra Repubblica Popolare Cinese si erge intrepida in Oriente.

Nel presente studio è stato scelto di considerare il termine *yìlì* 屹立 (ergersi) nella sua valenza di 'ergersi come una montagna', suggerita dal radicale *shān* 山 (montagna) che compone *yì* 屹.<sup>8</sup> In quest'ottica, la metafora concettuale soggiacente alla suddetta espressione è LA RPC È UNA MONTAGNA. La posizione di rilievo occupata dalla RPC è descritta nei termini dell'altitudine di una montagna: come la vetta di un monte domina la vallata dall'alto, così, la RPC è capace di imporsi non solo in Oriente, ma sul mondo intero.

Nella metafora della natura è stata fatta confluire quella che utilizza il dominio 'pianta', il quale è ampiamente utilizzato nel discorso politico cinese con diverse valenze. Si pensi, ad esempio, al sintagma di derivazione confuciana ripreso nel decennio di Hu Jintao, *yǐ rén wéi běn* 以人为本 (considerare l'uomo come fondamento), nel quale il morfema *běn* 本 ha il significato di 'radice'. Esso sfrutta la metafora concettuale LA SOCIETÀ È UNA PIANTA per porre il benessere dell'uomo, e quindi dell'intero popolo cinese, al centro del progetto di sviluppo di una Cina moderna.

Nel discorso di Xi Jinping è possibile rintracciare alcune espressioni relative al dominio concettuale 'pianta', utilizzate per strutturare il concetto di 'sviluppo': la prosperità viene associata metaforicamente al *fánróng* 繁荣 (fiorire) di una pianta e i suoi benefici ai *chéngguǒ* 成果 (frutti).

使发展成果更多更公平惠及全体人民。

Dobbiamo far sì che i frutti dello sviluppo si estendano ancor di più e in modo ancor più equo all'intero popolo.

香港特别行政区同胞、澳门特别行政区同胞，要 [...] 共同维护和促进香港、澳门长期繁荣稳定。

I compatrioti delle zone amministrative speciali di Hong Kong e Macao [...] devono salvaguardare e promuovere a lungo e insieme la prosperità e la stabilità di Hong Kong e Macao.

Tra le metafore riguardanti la natura, in questa prolusione del 2013 è rilevabile anche quella che sfrutta il dominio concettuale 'fluire dell'acqua', il quale è spesso utilizzato nel discorso politico cinese per indicare fenomeni sui quali si ha scarso controllo. Ad esempio, il movimento stu-

8 Wang Wei Min e Huang Ya ascrivono il termine *yìlì* 屹立 (ergersi) al dominio concettuale 'costruzioni' e dunque, dal loro punto di vista, la metafora concettuale soggiacente alla suddetta proposizione sarebbe LA RPC È UN EDIFICIO (Wang, Huang 2011).

dentesco del 1989 è chiamato in cinese *bājiǔ xuécháo* 八九学潮 (marea studentesca del 1989), dove *cháo* 潮 ha appunto il significato di 'marea' (Wang, Huang 2011).

In questo discorso di Xi è possibile trovare un uso analogo di questo dominio nella prima proposizione dell'estratto seguente:

面对浩浩荡荡的时代潮流，面对人民群众过上更好生活的殷切期待，我们不能有丝毫自满，不能有丝毫懈怠，必须再接再厉、一往无前，继续把中国特色社会主义事业推向前进，继续为实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦而努力奋斗。

Di fronte all'impetuosa marea che travolge la nostra epoca e all'ardente desiderio covato dalle masse per un ulteriore miglioramento del tenore di vita, non possiamo minimamente compiacerci, non possiamo minimamente cedere, bensì dobbiamo intensificare gli sforzi e avanzare intrepidamente, dobbiamo continuare a promuovere e a sviluppare la causa del socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi, dobbiamo continuare a combattere con impegno per avverare il sogno cinese di grande rinascita della nazione cinese.

L'immagine metaforica espressa da *cháoliú* 潮流 (marea) è ulteriormente rafforzata dall'uso del determinante *hàohào dàngdàng* 浩浩荡荡 (lett. ondeggiare in modo impetuoso): così come non si possono controllare le maree, allo stesso modo non è possibile frenare tendenze o cambiamenti, siano essi relativi alla Cina o al mondo intero.

Risulta, così, evidente l'inclinazione all'astrazione del linguaggio politico contemporaneo, che ha portato lo studioso Cao Changqing a denominarlo *shuǐguǒ yǔyán* 水果语言 (linguaggio della frutta).<sup>9</sup> Il fatto che non vengano specificate le connotazioni della suddetta tendenza lascia ampio spazio all'interpretazione e, di conseguenza, all'azione: qualsiasi trasformazione, che sia essa sociale, economica, culturale e che avvenga tanto in Cina quanto al di fuori dei confini della RPC, può essere intesa come una tendenza che si deve fronteggiare e che quindi giustifica l'azione della leadership.

### 3.6 La metafora dell'essere vivente

La principale associazione metaforica che sfrutta il dominio concettuale dell'essere vivente, pone quest'ultimo in relazione al concetto di Cina.

<sup>9</sup> Cao Changqing (citato in Link 2013, pp. 246-247) utilizza la metafora della frutta per spiegare l'ambiguità del linguaggio politico: la parola 'banana' o 'mela' suscita un'immagine precisa nella mente dell'ascoltatore, mentre quella generica di 'frutta', proprio in virtù delle sue connotazioni generali, non stimola una figura ben delineata, consentendo di ritrattare le proprie affermazioni.

L'essere vivente è inteso tanto nella sua dimensione spirituale, quanto in quella fisica. A queste due sfere fanno rispettivamente riferimento i due estratti che seguono:

实现中国梦必须弘扬中国精神。这就是以爱国主义为核心的民族精神，以改革创新为核心的时代精神。这种精神是凝心聚力的兴国之魂、强国之魂。

Per realizzare il sogno cinese bisogna esaltare lo spirito cinese. Esso consiste proprio nello spirito nazionale che ha al centro il patriottismo e nello spirito della nostra epoca che ha al centro l'innovazione e le riforme. Questo spirito è l'anima di un Paese vigoroso, di un Paese forte, che vede condensare in sé forze fisiche e mentali.

实现中国梦必须凝聚中国力量。这就是中国各族人民大团结的力量。中国梦是民族的梦，也是每个中国人的梦。

Per realizzare il sogno cinese è necessario coagulare la forza della Cina. Essa deriva proprio dalla grande unione del popolo formato da tutti i gruppi etnici del Paese. Il sogno cinese è il sogno della Nazione ed è anche il sogno di ciascun individuo cinese.

Sia le espressioni *jīngshén* 精神 (spirito) e *hún* 魂 (anima) che *lìliàng* 力量 (forza) si riferiscono alla metafora concettuale LA CINA È UN ESSERE VIVENTE. Tale associazione metaforica svolge un ruolo chiave nel discorso politico legato al 'sogno cinese': il popolo è spronato a identificarsi con il suo stesso Paese e, di conseguenza, a identificare i propri sogni con quelli della madrepatria. L'intero discorso mira a neutralizzare qualsiasi forma di dissenso: così come tra tutte le componenti di un 'essere vivente' regna l'armonia, allo stesso modo ciascun individuo, essendo parte di un 'essere' più grande, deve dare prominenza al benessere comune, subordinando quello particolare.

#### **4 Analisi del linguaggio metaforico del discorso tenuto in occasione della ricorrenza del Quattro Maggio**

Nel discorso tenuto in occasione della ricorrenza del Quattro Maggio è possibile riscontrare gli stessi domini concettuali sopra individuati, tuttavia, in alcuni casi ne differisce l'utilizzo metaforico. Pertanto, di seguito, si procederà a classificare tutti i termini utilizzati in chiave metaforica nei rispettivi domini concettuali, ma l'analisi delle espressioni linguistiche e delle relative metafore prenderà in considerazione solo quelle non trattate in precedenza.

Casa/famiglia: *péngyǒu* 朋友 (amici) (6); *érnǚ* 儿女 (figli e figlie) (2); *dài* 代 (generazione) (10); *xuéxiào* 学校 (scuola) (1); *zhīxīn rén* 知心人 (amico intimo) (1).

Viaggio/strada: *fènjìn* 奋进 (avanzare audacemente) (2); *jìnchéng* 进程 (entrare nel percorso) (2); *qiántú* 前途 (strada di fronte) (1); *jiākuài* 加快 (accelerare) (1); *tūjìn* 推进 (avanzare) (1); *xiàngwǎng* 向往 (andare) (1); *qiánjǐng* 前景 (scenario di fronte) (1); *jiējìn* 接近 (avvicinarsi) (1); *jùlí* 距离 (distare) (1); *jìn* 近 (vicino) (4); *jiǎotàshídì* 脚踏实地 (piedi per terra) (2); *zhǐyǐn* 指引 (guidare) (1); *fāngxiàng* 方向 (direzione) (1); *lìjīng* 历经 (attraversare) (1); *jìnbù* 进步 (fare passi avanti) (3); *tújìng* 途径 (via, canale) (1); *chǔyú* 处于 (trovarsi); *yǐndǎo* 引导 (guidare) (1); *yuǎnháng* 远航 (navigare lontano) (1); *yīn xún shǒu jiù* 因循守旧 (seguire il sentiero tracciato) (1); *zǒu* 走 (procedere) (5); *jìn* 进 (entrare) (1); *kāitā* 开拓进取 (avanzare con decisione su nuove strade) (2); *yǒngwǎngzhíqián* 勇往直前 (avanzare coraggiosamente) (1); *yībù yībù* 一步一步 (passo dopo passo) (1); *zǒu dào* 走到 (giungere) (1); *dāngqián* 当前 (di fronte) (1); *qiánfāng* 前方 (davanti) (1); *lù zài jiǎoxià* 路在脚下 (la strada è sotto i piedi) (1); *chí ér bù xī* 驰而不息 (cavalcare senza sosta) (1); *chíchěng* 驰骋 (galoppare) (1); *jìnxíng* 进行 (portare avanti) (2); *jiētī* 阶梯 (scala) (1); *dàolù* 道路 (strada) (3); *féng shān kāilù* 逢山开路 (aprire una strada sulla vetta della montagna) (1); *yù hé jià qiáo* 遇河架桥 (costruire un ponte quando si incontra un fiume) (1); *xīn lù* 新路 (nuove strade) (1); *rénshēng zhī lù* 人生之路 (la strada della vita) (1); *tǎntú* 坦途 (cammino spianato) (1); *dǒupō* 陡坡 (erta) (1); *píngchuān* 平川 (piana) (1); *xiǎntān* 险滩 (rapide) (1); *zhídào* 直道 (strada dritta) (1); *wānlù* 弯路 (tornante) (1).

Guerra: *zhànxiàn* 战线 (fronte) (1); *fènjìn* 奋进 (avanzare audacemente) (2); *fèndòu* 奋斗 (lottare) (13); *bì shèng* 必胜 (sicura vittoria) (1); *jìnjūn* 进军 (marciare, avanzare) (3); *bǎowèi* 保卫 (proteggere, salvaguardare) (1); *chéngbài* 成败 (vincere o perdere) (1); *pīnbó* 拼搏 (lottare pertinacemente) (3); *jiěfàng* 解放 (liberare) (2); *shēnglìjūn* 生力军 (nuove leve dell'esercito) (1); *dòngyuán* 动员 (mobilitare) (2); *wǔzhuāng* 武装 (armamento, armare) (1); *bójí* 搏击 (lottare) (1); *tiǎozhàn* 挑战 (sfida, sfidare) (1); *gōngjiān* 攻坚 (assaltare) (1); *yīxiàn* 一线 (prima linea) (1); *qiányán* 前沿 (posizione avanzata) (1); *gōngguān* 攻关 (assaltare una posizione strategica) (1); *chuǎng* 闯 (irrompere) (2); *qiánliè* 前列 (prima linea) (1); *dàilǐng* 带领 (guidare, condurre) (1); *jǔ qǐ.....qízhì* 举起.....旗帜 (issare la bandiera) (1); *wéihù* 维护 (proteggere) (2).

Costruzione: *jiànshè* 建设 (costruire) (5); *jiànchéng* 建成 (costruire) (2); *lánútú* 蓝图 (progetto) (1); *láo gù* 牢固 (saldo, stabile) (2); *quèlì* 确立 (fondare) (1); *jiànli* 建立 (fondare) (3); *zhāshi* 扎实 (solido, forte) (1); *jīchǔ* 基础 (fondamenta) (3); *jīcéng* 基层 (livello di base) (3); *dòngliáng zhī cái* 栋梁之材 (legno della trave di colmo) (1); *chuàngjiàn* 创建 (fondare, istituire) (1); *dājiàn* 搭建 (erigere) (1); *jiàngōnglìyè* 建功立业 (costruire un successo) (1).

Natura: *yuányuán bùduàn* 源源不断 (sorgente continua) (1); *fàngfēi* 放飞

(lasciar volare) (1); *yuánquán* 源泉 (sorgente, fonte) (1); *chéngguǒ* 成果 (frutto) (1); *tiāndì* 天地 (cielo e terra, mondo) (2); *xīnfēng* 新风 (nuovi venti) (1); *zhāoqì* 朝气 (brezza del mattino) (2); *tiānkōng* 天空 (cielo) (1); *fánróng* 繁荣 (fiorire) (2); *péngbó* 蓬勃 (fiorire) (1); *shùlì* 树立 (piantare in posizione eretta<sup>10</sup>) (5); *bōzhòng* 播种 (seminare).

Essere vivente: *jīngshén* 精神 (spirito) (11); *lìliàng* 力量 (forza) (4); *quē gài* 缺钙 (mancanza di calcio) (1); *zēngqiáng* 增强 (rafforzare) (3); *línghún* 灵魂 (anima) (1); *huóli* 活力 (vitalità) (1); *zì qiáng bù xī* 自强不息 (rafforzarsi senza sosta) (2); *zì lì zì qiáng* 自立自强 (stare in piedi e rafforzarsi in autonomia) (1).

Macchina/attrezzi: *zuòyòng* 作用 (funzione) (2); *dònglì* 动力 (forza motrice) (2); *néngliàng* 能量 (energia) (2); *rónglú* 熔炉 (crogiolo) (1); *dàidòng* 带动 (mettere in moto) (1).

Altro: *tuò shǒu kě dé* 唾手可得 (facile come sputarsi su una mano); *diǎnrán* 点燃 (accendere il fuoco); *dàjú* 大局 (grande scacchiera); *shuāida* 摔打 (sbattere); *cuòzhé* 挫折 (rovescio); *kǎoyàn* 考验 (mettere alla prova); *bì lù lán lǚ* 筚路蓝缕 (un carro di legna e vestiti a brandelli); *qiè'érbùshě* 锲而不舍 (incidere senza smettere mai); *shǒu pián zú zhī* 手胼足胝 (mani e piedi callosi); *duànliàn* 锻炼 (forgiare, fondere); *chuíliàn* 锤炼 (martellare); *yǎngchéng* 养成 (coltivare, allevare); *bōzhòng* 播种 (seminare); *wǔtái* 舞台 (palcoscenico) (1); *sùzào* 塑造 (plasmare) (1).

#### 4.1 La metafora della famiglia

Nell'analisi del dominio concettuale della famiglia, si è fatto confluire quello dell'amicizia, in quanto affini tra loro. Quest'ultimo è stato utilizzato sin dall'appellativo con cui Xi Jinping si rivolge al suo pubblico: *qīngnián péngyǒumen, tóngzhìmen* 青年朋友们, 同志们 (giovani amici e compagni). Usato in chiave metaforica, il dominio dell'amicizia è accostabile a quello della famiglia poiché entrambi instaurano un saldo legame tra lo *speaker* e gli ascoltatori. Infatti, il termine *péngyǒu* 朋友 (amici) crea un'aria di intimità tra Xi e gli astanti e fa leva sulla relazione di amicizia tra il Partito, di cui egli è rappresentante, il suo giovane pubblico e l'intero popolo. Da qui ne deriva che IL PARTITO È UN AMICO DEL POPOLO.

L'uso metaforico del dominio dell'amicizia si distingue da quello della famiglia poiché gli amici, a differenza dei familiari, sono oggetto di scelta. In quest'ottica la relazione amicale può essere considerata ancor più solida rispetto a quella familiare.

<sup>10</sup> Nel loro studio Wang Weimin e Huang Ya (2011) ascrivono il termine *shùlì* 树立 (stabilire, fondare) al dominio concettuale delle costruzioni. Tuttavia, nel presente studio esso viene considerato in virtù della sua composizione morfemica, *shù* 树 (albero, piantare) e *lì* 立 (stare in piedi), e viene quindi incluso nella categoria del mondo naturale.

La necessità di instaurare un rapporto confidenziale tra il Partito e il popolo è chiaramente esplicitata nella sezione che segue:

各级领导干部要关注青年愿望、帮助青年发展、支持青年创业，做青年朋友的知心人，做青年工作的热心人。

I quadri dirigenti di tutti i livelli devono prestare attenzione alle aspirazioni dei giovani, aiutarli nello sviluppo e sostenerne le nuove attività, devono diventare intimi amici dei giovani ed essere entusiasti del loro lavoro.

In questo caso, al termine *péngyǒu* 朋友 (amico) si affianca l'espressione *zhīxīn rén* 知心人 (intimo amico), riconducibile al dominio dell'amicizia in virtù della sua composizione morfemica: formato da *zhī* 知 (conoscere), *xīn* 心 (mente-cuore) e *rén* 人 (persona), l'espressione indica una persona che 'conosce il mente-cuore', ovvero i sentimenti, le aspirazioni e la volontà dei 'giovani'.

In merito al dominio della famiglia, esso è, in primo luogo, esplicitato dall'espressione *zhōnghuá érǎnǚ* 中华儿女 (figli della Cina), ampiamente riscontrabile nell'intero discorso politico cinese (Link 2013, p. 201).

中国梦是历史的、现实的，也是未来的。中国梦凝结着无数仁人志士的不懈努力，承载着全体中华儿女的共同向往。

Il sogno cinese è un sogno storico, attuale e anche del futuro. Esso condensa l'impegno infaticabile di innumerevoli uomini dai nobili ideali, sopporta il peso delle speranze comuni ai figli dell'intera Cina.

In secondo luogo, anche qui si rileva la presenza dell'espressione linguistica *dài* 代 (generazione), ma ad essa soggiace la metafora LA NAZIONE È UNA FAMIGLIA, anziché IL PARTITO È UNA FAMIGLIA. I due passaggi che seguono sono i più rappresentativi di questa metafora:

中国梦是我们的，更是你们青年一代的。中华民族伟大复兴终将在广大青年的接力奋斗中变为现实。

Il sogno cinese è il nostro sogno, ma ancor più è della vostra generazione. La grande rinascita della nazione cinese sta, infine, per diventare realtà nella lotta che vede unite le forze delle vaste masse di giovani.

展望未来，我国青年一代必将大有可为，也必将大有作为。这是“长江后浪推前浪”的历史规律，也是“一代更比一代强”的青春责任。

Guardando al futuro, le nuove generazioni della Cina hanno sicuramente

buone speranze e di certo faranno anche grandi cose. Come 'nel fiume Yangzi le onde dietro sospingono quelle davanti', allo stesso modo la responsabilità della gioventù è di 'rinforzarsi generazione su generazione'.

In questa prolusione la metafora della famiglia assume un valore nuovo rispetto a quello riscontrato in precedenza: essa non solo assolve al compito di creare coesione, ma vuole altresì dare impulso all'azione. L'intero discorso è incentrato sul ricambio generazionale e, in particolare, sui compiti che i giovani astanti devono portare avanti, primo fra tutti, quello di realizzare il 'sogno cinese'. Questo intento è ulteriormente rafforzato dalla citazione di due versi di una novella contenuta nell'antologia *Qīng suǒ gāo yì* 青琐高议 (*Lofty judgement from the Green Lattice*) curata da Liu Fu (cfr. Mair 2001, p. 679), un personaggio ignoto vissuto durante l'epoca dei Song Settentrionali (960-1127). I due versi *chángjiāng hòulàng tuī qiánlàng* 长江后浪推前浪 (nel fiume Yangzi le onde dietro sospingono quelle davanti) e *yīdài gèng bǐ yīdài qiáng* 一代更比一代强 (rinforzarsi generazione su generazione) creano un'analogia tra le onde del fiume e le generazioni di una famiglia.

#### 4.2 La metafora del viaggio e della strada

In questo discorso i due domini del viaggio e della strada sono associati metaforicamente e rispettivamente a due concetti: il primo è collegato al 'sogno cinese'; il secondo, alla vita umana. Queste due metafore strutturano profondamente il discorso di Xi Jinping e la prima di esse, REALIZZARE IL SOGNO CINESE È UN VIAGGIO, è esplicitata nel passaggio che segue:

现在，我们比历史上任何时期都更接近实现中华民族伟大复兴的目标，比历史上任何时期都更有信心、更有能力实现这个目标。行百里者半九十。距离实现中华民族伟大复兴的目标越近，我们越不能懈怠，越要加倍努力，越要动员广大青年为之奋斗。

Guardando gli altri periodi storici, mai come adesso siamo stati così vicini all'obiettivo di grande rinascita della nazione cinese, mai come ora abbiamo avuto una tale fiducia e capacità per realizzarlo. Le difficoltà aumentano via via che ci si avvicina alla meta. Più l'obiettivo di realizzare la rinascita nazionale è vicino, più non possiamo essere fiacchi, più dobbiamo raddoppiare gli sforzi, ancor di più dobbiamo mobilitare le vaste masse di giovani a lottare per quest'obiettivo.

Le espressioni *jiējìn* 接近 (avvicinarsi), *jùlí* 距离 (distare) e *jìn* 近 (vicino) fanno tutte riferimento al 'sogno cinese', il quale è associato alla meta di un viaggio che ha inizio in un'epoca non precisata. La metafora concettuale



REALIZZARE IL SOGNO CINESE È UN VIAGGIO è enfatizzata dalla citazione del verso *xíng bǎi lǐ zhě bàn jiǔshí* 行百里者半九十 (lett. in un viaggio lungo cento *lǐ*, giunti a novanta *lǐ* si è solo a metà del viaggio), nel quale il carattere cinese *xíng* 行 ha appunto il significato di 'viaggiare'.<sup>11</sup>

La rilevanza di questa metafora appare ancor più evidente in relazione al fatto che essa viene ripresa più avanti nel discorso e, in particolare, in una sezione nella quale si fa riferimento alle sofferenze patite in passato dalla nazione cinese e alla sua capacità di risollevarsi:

我们的国家，我们的民族，从积贫积弱一步一步走到今天的发展繁荣，靠的就是一代又一代人的顽强拼搏，靠的就是中华民族自强不息的奋斗精神。当前，我们既面临着重要发展机遇，也面临着前所未有的困难和挑战。梦在前方，路在脚下。自胜者强，自强者胜。

Il nostro Paese, la nostra nazione, dalla grande povertà e debolezza è giunta, passo dopo passo, all'odierno sviluppo e splendore. Ciò su cui si è poggiata è proprio la lotta tenace di generazione dopo generazione, ciò su cui si è poggiata è proprio lo spirito combattente della nazione cinese che instancabilmente si rafforza. Oggi ci troviamo di fronte a importanti opportunità di sviluppo, ma anche a sfide e difficoltà senza precedenti. Il sogno è davanti a noi; la strada, sotto i nostri piedi. Chi domina sé è potente; chi rende se stesso potente, domina.

La metafora bellica e quella del viaggio sono qui legate dalla stessa funzione discorsiva, ossia creare un clima di tensione finalizzato all'azione. Gli ultimi due periodi dell'estratto di cui sopra, ovvero *mèng zài qiánfāng, lù zài jiǎoxià* 梦在前方，路在脚下 (il sogno è davanti a noi; la strada è sotto i nostri piedi) e *zì shèng zhě qiáng, zìqiáng zhě shèng* 自胜者强，自强者胜 (chi domina sé è potente; chi rende se stesso potente domina), assolvono alla funzione di spronare gli ascoltatori a essere risoluti e perseveranti. Tale funzione è messa in rilievo anche grazie alla struttura sintattica dei due periodi, entrambi formati da coppie di proposizioni parallele di quattro caratteri. Da questa combinazione risulta uno stile classicheggiante, ulteriormente rafforzato dalla presenza di una citazione classica. Nello specifico, il verso *zì shèng zhě qiáng* (chi domina sé è potente) è tratto dalla stanza 33 del *Laozi*, mentre la proposizione seguente ne riprende la struttura sintattica, pur non trattandosi di una citazione (Scarpari 2015a).

In considerazione del passo del *Laozi* da cui è stato tratto il riferimento, ossia *shèng rén zhě yǒulì yě, zì shèng zhě qiáng yě* 胜人者有力也，自胜者

11 Il verso compare nel *Zhànguó cè* 战国策 (Intrighi degli Stati Combattenti) come citazione di un'imprescisa 'ode' (*shī* 诗) e contiene un carattere in più (*bàn yú jiǔshí* 半于九十 anzi-ché *bàn jiǔshí* 半九十) rispetto a quanto riportato da Xi Jinping. Cfr. *Zhànguó cè* 7/1/7, in He Jianzhang 1990, vol. 1, p. 261).

强也 (chi domina gli altri ha forza, ma solo chi domina se stesso è potente), si evince come l'enfasi sia posta sull'indagine introspettiva, in quanto solo colui che conosce a fondo e 'domina' se stesso può diventare *qiáng* 强 (potente) e, dunque, andare oltre la semplice *lì* 力 (forza). Ponendo in relazione il senso generale che traiamo dal testo daoista con il concetto di 'sogno cinese', si potrebbe giungere alla conclusione che tale citazione voglia ancora una volta porre l'accento sul valore e il lavoro del singolo nel progetto di realizzazione del 'sogno cinese'. Infatti, ciascun individuo lavorando su se stesso e perseguendo i propri sogni, contribuisce a realizzare il 'comune sogno cinese'.

Con il medesimo obiettivo, si riscontra l'uso metaforico del dominio della strada che, come accennato in precedenza, è stato utilizzato per strutturare il concetto di vita umana ed è posto in relazione al viaggio che porta a realizzare il 'sogno cinese':

学习是成长进步的阶梯，实践是提高本领的途径。青年的素质和本领直接影响着实现中国梦的进程。

Lo studio è la scala per crescere e progredire, la pratica rappresenta la via per aumentare le proprie abilità. La formazione e le abilità dei giovani hanno un effetto diretto sul processo di realizzazione del sogno cinese.

In questo passaggio, i termini *jìnbù* 进步 (fare passi avanti), *jiētī* 阶梯 (scala) e *tújìng* 途径 (via, canale) sono relativi alla metafora concettuale LA VITA È UNA STRADA, mentre *jìnchéng* 进程 (entrare nel percorso) si riferisce al 'viaggio' del 'sogno cinese'.

### 4.3 La metafora bellica

Anche il discorso tenuto in occasione della ricorrenza del Quattro Maggio sfrutta ampiamente le metafore IL POPOLO È UN ESERCITO e REALIZZARE IL SOGNO CINESE È UNA GUERRA, le cui espressioni linguistiche sono ancor più numerose in questo secondo discorso. Inoltre, esse vengono poste in relazione al ruolo e ai compiti che la gioventù svolge all'interno della società. Tralasciando l'enumerazione di tutte le espressioni metaforiche, è comunque opportuno porre in rilievo come esse siano presenti dalle battute iniziali fino a quelle conclusive: in primo luogo, Xi Jinping si rivolge ai suoi giovani astanti con l'appellativo *gè tiáo zhànxiàn de yōuxiù qīngnián dàibīǎo* 各条战线的优秀青年代表 (eccellenti rappresentanti dei giovani dei diversi fronti), dove appunto il termine *zhànxiàn* 战线 (fronte) appartiene alla terminologia bellica. In secondo luogo, nella sezione conclusiva del discorso, Xi afferma:

青年朋友们，人的一生只有一次青春。现在，青春是用来奋斗的；将来，青春是用来回忆的。[...] 总之，只有进行了激情奋斗的青春，只有进行了顽强拼搏的青春，只有为人民作出了奉献的青春，才会留下充实、温暖、持久、无悔的青春回忆。

Giovani amici, nella vita c'è una sola giovinezza. Adesso la giovinezza serve a lottare, in futuro servirà a ricordare. [...] In breve, solo avendo condotto una giovinezza piena di lotte entusiasmanti, solo con una giovinezza piena di lotte tenaci, solo con una giovinezza votata al popolo, si può averne un ricordo pieno, caldo, duraturo e senza rimpianti.

In questo passaggio, la funzione della metafora bellica è quella di spingere all'azione ed è interessante notare come essa sia velata da un timbro linguistico che richiama un consiglio fornito da una persona saggia e con una maggiore esperienza.

#### 4.4 La metafora delle costruzioni

In primis, il dominio delle costruzioni è usato metaforicamente per strutturare il concetto di società:

广大青年要 [...] 在改革开放和社会主义现代化建设的大熔炉中，在社会的大学校园里，掌握真才实学，增益其所不能，努力成为可堪大用、能担重任的栋梁之材。

Nel grande crogiolo della costruzione della modernizzazione socialista e della politica di riforme e apertura; nella grande scuola della società, dovete sfruttare al meglio il vostro talento genuino e aumentarne la versatilità, impegnarvi a diventare le 'colonne portanti' capaci di svolgere importanti funzioni e di supportare pesanti responsabilità.

La metafora concettuale LA SOCIETÀ È UN EDIFICIO si specifica attraverso l'espressione *dòngliáng zhī cái* 栋梁之材 (lett. il legno della trave di colmo), che rappresenta la citazione del *Sānguó yǎnyì* 三国演义 (Romanzo dei tre regni) di Luo Guanzhong (1330-1400 ca). Questa espressione indica l'asse portante di legno che sorregge il tetto di un edificio. Essa viene, qui, utilizzata metaforicamente per designare il ruolo dei giovani che vengono identificati con l'asse portante, così da enfatizzare il loro ruolo principale nello sviluppo della Cina e nella realizzazione della 'grande rinascita della nazione cinese'. Il pensiero messo in risalto dalla metafora è conforme ai principi del Movimento di Nuova Cultura che vedeva nei giovani l'unica spinta propulsiva in grado di attivare il processo di rigenerazione del Paese. Un uso metaforico particolarmente interessante del dominio delle costruzioni lo si ritrova nel passo che segue:

要用中国梦打牢广大青少年的共同思想基础，教育和帮助青少年树立正确的世界观、人生观、价值观，永远热爱我们伟大的祖国，永远热爱我们伟大的人民，永远热爱我们伟大的中华民族，坚定跟着党走中国道路。

Bisogna creare con il sogno cinese una solida base ideologica comune a tutte le vaste masse di giovani, educare e aiutare i giovani a stabilire una visione del mondo, della vita e un sistema di valori corretti, amare sempre ardentemente la nostra grande madrepatria, il nostro grande popolo e la nostra grande nazione cinese.

Nella prima proposizione di questo estratto, il concetto di ideologia è associato metaforicamente a un'opera edilizia, le cui *jīchǔ* 基础 (fondamenta) devono essere fortificate attraverso il 'sogno cinese'. Il 'sogno cinese' è, dunque, lo 'strumento' per *dǎ* 打 (fare) in modo che siano *láo* 牢 (saldo, solido) le fondamenta ideologiche comuni a tutti i giovani. Questa proposizione fa quindi riferimento all'ipotesi che il 'sogno cinese' sia in concreto un concetto finalizzato a creare un immaginario collettivo, volto a consolidare il senso d'appartenenza dei giovani astanti e del popolo cinese nel suo complesso.

#### 4.5 La metafora della natura

La principale associazione metaforica che sfrutta il dominio concettuale dell'ambiente naturale lega il concetto di giovinezza a quello di primavera. Essa è riscontrabile anche in altre culture, ma in quella cinese risulta particolarmente significativa. Infatti, il cinese *qīngchūn* 青春, composto dai morfemi *qīng* 青 (verde-blu<sup>12</sup>) e *chūn* 春 (primavera, vitalità, passione amorosa), ha il duplice significato di 'giovinezza' e 'primavera' e il morfema *qīng* (verde-blu) compone altresì il termine *qīngnián* 青年 (anni verdi) che significa 'giovinezza' (Link 2013, p. 152).

L'intero discorso di Xi Jinping gioca sull'ambivalenza della parola *qīngchūn* (giovinezza-primavera), così, diverse espressioni linguistiche richiamano a questa stagione e, tra esse, la più rappresentativa è contenuta nel passo seguente:

广大青年要勇敢肩负起时代赋予的重任，志存高远，脚踏实地，努力在实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦的生动实践中放飞青春梦想。

Voi, vaste masse di giovani, dovete assumervi con coraggio la pesante

<sup>12</sup> Il termine *qīng* 青 può riferirsi al 'verde', come nel caso di *qīngjiāo* 青椒 (peperoncino verde), al 'blu' come in *qīngtiān* 青天 (cielo blu) e persino al 'nero' come in *qīng bù* 青布 (stoffa nera).

responsabilità che l'epoca vi conferisce; con alte ambizioni e piedi per terra, dovete impegnarvi a far volare i sogni della giovinezza all'interno di una vivida prassi finalizzata ad avverare il sogno cinese di grande rinascita della nazione cinese.

L'immagine metaforica suscitata dall'espressione *fàngfēi* 放飞 (far volare) i *mèngxiǎng* 梦想 (sogni) richiama alla stagione primaverile poiché quest'ultima è generalmente associata al volo migratorio degli uccelli. Essa rappresenta un'espressione linguistica della metafora consueta LA GIOVINEZZA È LA PRIMAVERA.

La metafora della primavera usata da Xi Jinping si collega direttamente al pensiero di Li Dazhao. In questo discorso è, infatti, presente la citazione di due versi della poesia *Qīngchūn* 青春 (Primavera), scritta dal primo marxista cinese e pubblicata l'1 ottobre 1916 sulla rivista *Xīn Qīngnián* 新青年 (Gioventù nuova):

“以青春之我……，创建青春之国家，青春之民族”

«Con l'io primaverile... creerete paesi e nazioni primaverili»<sup>13</sup>

La poesia di Li Dazhao è intrisa di precetti daoisti: egli riprende la 'dialettica del mutamento' del *Zhuangzi* come chiave di lettura del momento storico che la Cina stava attraversando all'inizio del XX secolo e la stessa metafora della primavera è ripresa dal testo appartenente alla tradizione daoista. Così come espresso in questa poesia, il pensiero di Li è ancorato alla sfera del soggettivismo; la primavera, infatti, è intesa da Li, non tanto come stagione naturale della vita, o come 'futuro luminoso', ma come una decisione che il soggetto, l'io primaverile, deve prendere nel presente per dare avvio a un'esistenza nuova: centrale nella poesia è l'azione che l'io deve compiere per far sì che la Cina *zàishēng* 再生 (rinascita). Di fatto, il pensiero di Li Dazhao è un pensiero positivo che attribuisce al soggetto il potere e le capacità di sovvertire le sorti della Cina, le quali, dopo il fallimento dell'esperienza repubblicana, apparivano ineluttabili a molti (Pozzana 1994, pp. 7-28).

In questo contesto occorre ricordare che Li Dazhao è stato un punto di riferimento non solo teorico, ma anche organizzativo del Movimento del Quattro Maggio. La citazione di cui sopra è certamente mossa dall'intento di ricollegarsi a uno dei massimi esponenti del periodo più intellettualmente fecondo del secolo scorso in Cina. Consideriamo l'intero periodo in cui è incastonata la citazione:

<sup>13</sup> Pozzana 1994, p. 113. Nella traduzione la persona della coniugazione verbale è stata adeguata alla redazione del testo.

广大青年要有敢为人先的锐气，勇于解放思想、与时俱进，敢于上下求索、开拓进取，树立在继承前人的基础上超越前人的雄心壮志，“以青春之我……，创建青春之国家，青春之民族”。

Voi, vaste masse di giovani, dovete avere la grinta per osare a essere pionieri, dovete avere il coraggio di emancipare il pensiero, di avanzare con i tempi, dovete osare nel ricercare ovunque, avanzare con decisione su nuove strade, stabilire sulla base dell'eredità nobili ideali e grandi aspirazioni che superino quelli dei predecessori, «con l'io primaverile... creerete paesi e nazioni primaverili».

Si potrebbe opinare che il presente discorso tralasci la profondità filosofica propria della poesia di Li Dazhao per concentrarsi principalmente sull'aspetto propositivo della sua 'primavera' e che la motivazione principale della citazione consista nello stimolare un atteggiamento positivo volto all'azione. A sostegno di questa ipotesi vi è il fatto che nell'estratto sono presenti altre due citazioni: la prima è lo slogan dell'epoca di Deng, *jiěfàng sīxiǎng* 解放思想 (emancipare il pensiero); la seconda è *yǔ shí jù jìn* 与时俱进 (avanzare con i tempi) che rappresenta un passo dell'opera di Cai Yuanpei, *Zhōngguó lúnǐ xué shǐ* 中国伦理学史 (Storia dell'etica cinese).

Da ciò è possibile dedurre che Xi Jinping utilizzi queste citazioni per collegare il momento attuale a due passaggi cruciali nella storia della Cina: il periodo del Movimento di Nuova Cultura e l'inizio della nuova epoca di 'riforme e apertura'. Si vuole, dunque, associare questa fase di preludio alla 'grande rinascita della nazione cinese' a tali passaggi storici di profonde trasformazioni.

## 5 Riflessioni sul valore delle metafore che strutturano il concetto di 'sogno cinese'

Da quanto esposto, si evince che la metafora onirica dell'attuale dirigenza cinese è strutturata da diversi domini concettuali. Nello specifico, dall'analisi dei due discorsi sono emerse le metafore REALIZZARE IL SOGNO CINESE È UNA STRADA, REALIZZARE IL SOGNO CINESE È UNA GUERRA, IL SOGNO CINESE È UNA COSTRUZIONE, REALIZZARE IL SOGNO CINESE È UN VIAGGIO. A queste è possibile affiancare le metafore della famiglia e dell'essere vivente, le quali, sebbene utilizzate in relazione ai concetti di Nazione e di Cina, sono comunque impiegate per suffragare il 'progetto sogno cinese'. Pertanto, dal punto di vista delle metafore concettuali, il 'sogno cinese' viene considerato come un sogno della 'famiglia cinese' e dell' 'essere vivente Cina'.

A conclusione e completamento dell'analisi fin qui svolta, è possibile suddividere tali metafore in due categorie sulla base della funzione discor-

siva. Tale distinzione trae spunto dal pensiero di Bob Hodge e Kam Louie (1999). Gli autori, muovendo dal presupposto che l'ideologia non sia mai unitaria o omogenea ma che operi come un coniugato di contraddizioni, distinguono tra *P-ideology* e *S-ideology*: la prima si fonda su un rapporto di potere e si esprime attraverso opposizioni binarie, costruendo differenze; la seconda mira a velare tali differenze (Hodge, Louie 1999, pp. 47-49).

Alla prima categoria possono essere ricondotte la metafora bellica e quelle relative al dominio concettuale del viaggio e della strada. In proposito, si consideri il seguente estratto del discorso tenuto in occasione della ricorrenza del Quattro Maggio:

中国特色社会主义是我们党带领人民历经千辛万苦找到的实现中国梦的正确道路。

Il socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi è la giusta strada per realizzare il sogno cinese, che il nostro partito ha trovato guidando il popolo attraverso infinite difficoltà.

Questo passaggio rappresenta un chiaro esempio della funzione attribuita alla *P-ideology*, ovvero di «express the power of powerful» (Hodge, Louie 1999, p. 48). La contrapposizione è, qui, tra il Partito e il popolo, e la *P-ideology* si esprime enfatizzando le capacità e il potere del Partito come entità distinta dal popolo.

Alla seconda categoria possono essere ascritte, invece, tutte quelle metafore che mirano a creare intimità e che esortano alla coesione sociale attraverso il richiamo alla sfera emotiva. Ne rappresenta un esempio emblematico la metafora della famiglia. Si aggiungono quelle delle costruzioni e dell'essere vivente: la prima perché enfatizza la necessità di lavorare insieme per un progetto comune; la seconda perché promuove l'identificazione del PCC e dell'intero popolo in un unico essere vivente.

A integrazione di quanto sin qui esposto, è necessario osservare come alla prima delle due categorie indicate è possibile riconoscere altresì la funzione discorsiva che lo studioso Ji Fengyuan (2004, p. 89) attribuisce all'uso della terminologia bellica, ossia quello di infondere il senso di urgenza tipico di uno stato di guerra. Così, la metafora REALIZZARE IL SOGNO CINESE È UN VIAGGIO sprona al raggiungimento della 'meta' e, quindi, del 'sogno cinese'.

Come anticipato all'inizio, l'analisi fin qui condotta ha messo in luce la macro-funzione che sostiene e unisce tra loro tanto le categorie metaforiche, quanto gli espedienti retorici utilizzati da Xi Jinping nel contesto dei due discorsi, ovvero promuovere l'unità nazionale.

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mostra 'La strada verso la rinascita' Xi Jinping ha messo in evidenza la necessità di porsi come un anello di congiunzione tra passato e futuro, di ereditare il passato e costruire il futuro, di continuare ad avanzare arditamente verso l'obiettivo di grande rinascita della nazione cinese) [online]. *Xinhua wang*, 29 novembre. Disponibile all'indirizzo [http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2012-11/29/c\\_113852724.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2012-11/29/c_113852724.htm) (2016/05/09).

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# A Linguistic Overview of Brand Naming in the Chinese-speaking World

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**Abstract** Brand names are a crucial component of marketing strategies, since they influence brand perception. Chinese consumers seem to be very sensitive to brand names, and thus the choice of an effective brand name is very important for the acceptance of a particular product or service by the public. Generally speaking, there seems to be a tendency towards localization of brand names: foreign brand names undergo adaptation to various degrees in order to meet the needs of the Chinese consumers. A good knowledge of the Chinese language and culture is essential to understand brand naming practices in the Chinese-speaking world and to create suitable Chinese versions of foreign brand names. Here the main linguistic strategies adopted for the creation of Chinese brand names and for the translation of foreign brand names into Chinese are discussed, also highlighting some cultural factors which affect brand naming creation.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Brand Naming in China. – 3 Linguistic Aspects in Chinese Brand Naming. – 4 Chinese Brand Names. – 4.1 Brand Names Formed Through Compounding. – 4.2 Modified *chéngyǔ*. – 4.3 Acronyms and Initialisms. – 4.4 Alphanumeric and Other Brand Names Containing Digits and Letters. – 4.5 Foreign and Foreign-sounding Names. – 4.6 Further Remarks. – 5 Translation of Foreign Brand Names into Chinese. – 5.1 Literal Translation. – 5.2 Phonetic Adaptation. – 5.3 Phonetic-semantic Adaptation. – 5.4 Graphic Loans. – 5.5 Creation of Original Names. – 5.6 Hybrid Forms. – 5.7 Common Semantic Areas. – 5.8 The Chinese Translation of the Best Global Brands 2014. – 5.9 Regional Variation in Brand Names. – 6 Discussion. – 7 Concluding Remarks. – Appendix: The Top 100 Global Brands According to the *Interbrand 2014* Classification and Their Chinese Version.

**Keywords** Brand names. Word formation. Translation. Localization.

## 1 Introduction

Brand names play a crucial role in marketing strategies, since they may significantly contribute to the success or failure of a new product or service (Armstrong, Kotler 1997). Assigning a name to a brand means characterizing a product or service in order to make it attractive for the potential consumer. A brand name should suggest positive connotations and the relevance of the product, be short, distinctive and easy to memorize (Robertson 1989; Kohli, LaBanh 1997).

In order to make a brand successful both on the local and on the international market, different aspects should be taken into account. A crucial

aspect to consider is the linguistic component, which is the essence in branding (Chan, Huang 2001a), since it directly affects the function of brand names. In choosing a brand name one should take into account phonological, morphological and semantic aspects (see Chan 1990; Chan, Huang 1997, 2001a). The linguistic characteristics of brand names may differ according to the language at issue; for example, Chinese brand names differ greatly from European ones, due to the typological distance between Chinese and European languages and to the different writing systems. Moreover, cultural differences, social values, beliefs and attitudes, which vary greatly among societies, also significantly influence brand perception. Thus, standardized brands generally seem not to be suitable in China, and Western companies tend to localize their brand names, adapting them to the needs of the Chinese consumers (see e.g. Schmitt, Pan 1994; Francis, Lam, Walls 2002).<sup>1</sup> A further difficulty is creating a 'universal' Chinese brand name working in all the Chinese-speaking world (here meant to include the PRC, Hong Kong/Macau and Taiwan), given the linguistic and cultural differences among different regions.

The main aim of this paper is to provide a linguistic overview of brand naming in China, both of original Chinese brand names and of foreign brand names adapted to Chinese. The paper is organized as follows. In the first part, we will make a brief historical excursus on brand naming in China. We will discuss the linguistic characteristics of Chinese relevant for brand naming, and we will then show the main strategies for the creation of Chinese brand names. In the second part, we will discuss the strategies adopted in the translation of foreign brand names into Chinese and we will provide an analysis of the top 100 best global brands 2014 according to the *Interbrand classification*.<sup>2</sup> We will also provide a brief overview of

1 A 'completely standardized' brand is one which has «one name that is used in all countries and therefore has one variation» (Alashban et al. 2002, p. 31). In contrast, an adapted brand name may have different variations throughout the world. The issues of brand standardization and of the opposition between standardization and adaptation have attracted the attention of scholars (see de Chernatony, Halliburton, Bernath 1995; Theodosiou, Leonidou 2003). Advocates of the standardization strategy highlight some advantages of this strategy: e.g. significant economies of scale, greater identification of the product from market to market, ease of coordinating the promotion, message consistency, cost savings (see e.g. Alashban et al. 2002; Theodosiou, Leonidou 2003; Backhaus, van Doorn 2007). However, the adoption of a 100% standardization strategy is quite rare and may lead to cultural problems (Burton 2009). Advocates of adaptation stress that, despite increasing globalization, there are still too many differences in customers needs, purchasing power, culture and traditions, law and regulations; thus firms must adapt their marketing strategies to the circumstances of different markets. Yet others propose a contingency perspective: standardization and adaptation should be considered as the two ends of a continuum, in which companies' marketing activities fall between the two extremes (see Alashban et al. 2002; Francis, Lam, Walls 2002; Theodosiou, Leonidou 2003).

2 <http://www.bestglobalbrands.com/2014/ranking/> (2016-03-30).

the main factors which sometimes make it difficult to find a single translation effective in the whole Chinese-speaking world, providing examples of different brand name adaptations in the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

## 2 Brand Naming in China

As highlighted by Jaw, Wang, Hsu (2011, p. 641), «although the concept of branding has been considered extensively in products and services, branding in Chinese is a relatively emerging phenomenon». It is often assumed that brands were introduced into China from the West at the beginning of the nineteenth century (see Wang 2000) and, according to some, Mao Zedong's Communist rule disrupted the presence of brands, which were introduced again later, in 1979, under the economic reforms promoted by Deng Xiaoping (known as 改革开放 *gǎigé kāifàng* 'reform and opening' in China), which allowed foreign branded goods to enter the Chinese market (see the overview in Tian, Dong 2011). However, some works challenge this view (see Gerth 2003, 2008; Hamilton, Lai 1989), stating that brands were not introduced into China from the West, but were already present in late imperial China (tenth to nineteenth century). In what follows we summarize the different stages of the introduction of brand names in China presented by Tian and Dong (2011).

In late imperial China, brands were used in a variety of products to facilitate their distribution beyond their place of production. Hamilton and Lai (1989) highlight that 'famous products' were listed in different sources: for instance, local gazetteers devoted a section to 'famous local products', and government officials reported to the throne on the variety of products available in local markets. The mark of the selling firm became an important indication of quality, prestige and reliability. It is interesting to note that even at that time there were cases of brand pirating: the mark of a successful brand was used to confer high-quality associations to lesser-known goods (Hamilton, Lai 1989).

The Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1856-1860) and the Treaty of Nanking (1842), the first of the so-called 'unequal treaties', marked the beginning of confrontations with the West. In this period, imported goods entered port cities such as Shanghai and gradually spread to other areas of the country (Zhao, Belk 2008). Thus, Chinese consumers had considerable exposure to Western brands, such as *Kodak*, *GE*, *Colgate*, *American Standard* and *Quaker Oats*, as well as to Western-made products, often new products of which consumers had no previous experience (Tian, Dong 2011, p. 40). These goods were clearly marked as foreign, adding the morpheme 洋 *yáng* 'foreign' (also, 'modern') to the names of products, but they were promoted with advertising tied to Chinese folklore and local culture (Tian, Dong 2011, p. 40).

During this period China lacked tariff autonomy; the 'unequal treaties' made China unable to restrict imports by raising tariffs (Gerth 2003). According to Gerth (2003, 2008), this led to what he calls 'National Products Movement', which divided consumer goods in China-made, deemed 'patriotic', and foreign, deemed 'treasonous' (Gerth 2008, p. 3). The patriotic habit of consuming China-made goods was advanced through advertisements, exhibitions and other activities, and campaigns educated people to visually distinguish 'pure' Chinese products from foreign ones. Besides, the movement suggested that Western countries and Japan already established product nationality as the dominant consumption criterion (see Tian, Dong 2011). This movement aimed at discouraging the consumption of foreign goods, seen as an 'immoral act', and at promoting the consumption of domestic goods, the 'national blood'; there was thus cultural continuity between this period and the Communist period under Mao, which is apparent in the practice of dividing products into domestic and foreign, attaching respectively positive and negative meanings to them (Tian, Dong 2011). This challenges the common assumption that the Communist Revolution and Mao's rule represented a total cultural break with China's former capitalist period (Wang 2000).

However, in Mao's China the demonisation of 'foreignness' was based on different premises: it was to be understood in a frame of reference in which the West was equated with capitalism, the source of all evil, and thus always associated with negative concepts and feelings. As Ji (2004, p. 279) puts it, «in the discourse of the Cultural Revolution, China was a model for the rest of the world», whereas «the world could teach China nothing».

As some scholars suggest, brands did not exist in China between 1949 and 1978, and even after the economic reforms the Chinese market was dominated by state-owned trademarks rather than brands (see Croll 2006). In line with this view, Tian and Dong (2011) argue that the concept of 'brands' was not meaningful to some Chinese consumers until after the economic reforms, as shown in this excerpt from an interview to a participant to their survey on brand naming:

INTERVIEWER Were there branded cosmetics?

PARTICIPANT I do not remember if there were brands at that moment.

Even if there were we did not talk of them by using the brand names. We tended to mention products by their function more often than by manufacturer or the name the manufacturer had given it. Even Tiger Balm, at that moment we called it *qing-liang-you* [meaning 'cooling oil']. Nobody called it 'Tiger cooling oil' though we did see this tiger printed on the box. The first time I made the connection between the product and its brand was later when I started to work in Shenzhen in 1986 with those people from other countries. They asked me where to

get Tiger Balm so as to bring some souvenirs back to their countries. I was lucky because my reaction was quick enough to immediately think about the tiger image on the box. Cosmetics for make-up were generally named by *yan-zhi* (to make red), *fan-shi-lin* (to prepare the face for or clean up after make-up, like Vaseline). (Tian, Dong 2011, p. 43)

As Croll (2006) highlights, in the three decades after the economic reform, the emphasis shifted from production and work to consumption and lifestyle. This process was facilitated by the rising incomes of foreign joint ventures' employees.

Croll identifies three waves of consumption. The first one took place during the 1980s, when consumers started to purchase goods other than food, like bicycles, colour television sets, refrigerators, washing machines, etc. At that time, some important changes happened: the introduction of Western brands, the emergence of retail stores and of the awareness of fashion. Western firms, encouraged by the success of global brands in Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore, started to promote heavily their brands in China. In that period, leading fashion designers shops such as *Louis Vuitton*, *Christian Dior* and *Gucci*, as well as less expensive stores like *Benetton*, *GAP* and *Giordano* appeared in China. The first KFC opened in Beijing in 1987, while *McDonald's* appeared in the early 1990s in Shenzhen. Promotion of Western brands was facilitated by advertising and other TV programmes on fashion, make-up and home furnishing. The West was no longer seen as an exploiter but, due to the modernization bid of the government, it became a desired destination (Croll 2006). This first wave of consumption was characterized by movements aimed at containing the new trends too, such as the 'Anti-spiritual pollution campaign' (清除精神污染 *qīngchú jīngshén wūrǎn*, 1983-1984) and the anti-bourgeois movement, which to a degree echoed the anti-Western spirit of Maoist China (see above). Anyway, by the end of the 1980s, the government started to stimulate more directly consumption with new policies aimed at encouraging spending (Croll 2006).

The second wave of consumption ran from the early to the late 1990s, when economic reforms aimed at elevating living standards were promoted by the government (Croll 2006). In this period people began to purchase more consumer goods, including mobile phones, air conditioners, microwave ovens and the like, and new public spaces were devoted to the display of retail goods. Western brand retailers with storefronts included *B&Q*, *Carrefour*, *Metro*, *Walmart* and others.

Despite the policies aimed at stimulating consumption, Tsui et al. (2004) highlight that other economic reforms threatened jobs and pensions in the state sector and increased the cost of health insurance and education. These reforms lead to higher unemployment and uncertainty among the employees, and thus the result was a tendency to save rather than to con-



sume (for details see Tian, Dong 2011). As a result, many Western brand retail centres closed and enthusiasm for Western lifestyles began to wane. At the same time, Chinese brands offering comparable quality at lower prices, as e.g. *Qingdao* beer, *Forever* (bicycles) and *Legend* (computers), emerged to compete with Western brands (Croll 2006).

The third wave of consumption started between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century and continues today. This phase saw active effort to promote the size of China's consumer market to the West, in order to facilitate China's negotiations to enter the World Trade Organization (WTO). At the same time, other governing practices aimed at promoting national brands and at highlighting their prospective success as global brands (Croll 2006; Tian, Dong 2011). After joining the WTO in November 2001, China needed to open its markets, which resulted in strong foreign competition, and reduced tariffs on imports and exports. However, most markets remained local or regional, as it is apparent from registered names, which typically begin with a city or province name, as e.g. *Shanghai Baosteel*, *Qingdao Haier* (Tsui et al. 2004); Chinese brands started to compete directly with international brands on a large scale but, as highlighted in the 2007 China Brand Report (Yu 2007), among the top 100 brands in the world, there was no Chinese brand.<sup>3</sup> Thus, there were efforts aimed at creating national brands for global markets and at stimulating brand innovation. Differently from the past, these practices were not a way to reject and vilify Western brands, but nonetheless China's national brands were seen as a source of cultural pride that people can support with their consumption choices (Tian, Dong 2011).

Some claim that taste among the Chinese upper-middle class is increasingly converging towards that of the Western consumer (Garner 2005), and that there is a tendency to imitate Western lifestyle by choosing Western brands, driven by a desire to display sophistication (see Tian, Dong 2011). Reports reveal that the demand of some Western products exceeds that for domestic brands (e.g. skin care brand *Olay* and *Coca-Cola*) and that the sales of Western-brand automobiles are double those of Chinese ones (Garner 2005). Actually, Tian and Dong (2011, p. 51) show that Western brands are a meaningful category of consumption to Chinese consumers, with a set of defining characteristics: 1) 'Western otherness', as conveyed by perceived country of origin<sup>4</sup> and through translation practices (see section 5); 2) international fame; 3) guaranteed quality; 4) technologically

3 We will see in section 5.8 that in the *Interbrand best global brand 2014* classification there is just one Chinese brand listed among the top 100 brands.

4 Tian and Dong (2011) show that foreign brands were considered only those perceived as having ties to Western developed countries and with Japan, through which China learned about the West and which started to participate in the global economy before China (Gries 2004).

advanced designs or production; 5) high price. These attributes, except for high price, are generally positive.

However, despite these positive attributes, Chinese consumers attach not only positive, but also negative meanings to Western brand names, using Western brands to assert their idea of national identity. Tian and Dong (2011) show that some of the participants to their survey see Western brands as instruments of 'freedom': they free Chinese consumers from restrictive ways of thinking and introduce them to new practices and ideas. Several of the interviewees also highlight the irrationality of expressing 'nationalist emotions' by rejecting Western brands. However, other interviewees deem the West as an imperialist oppressor and Western brands as instruments of domination, which can damage Chinese culture and undermine national identity. For instance, Tian and Dong (2011) highlight that the 2009 China Brand Report described *Johnson&Johnson's* acquisition of *Dabao*, a Chinese skin-care brand since 1985, as a case of a national brand «falling into enemy hands» (Yu 2009, p. 44). Yet other fantasize scenarios of restoring national pride; they envision a «national industry that learned and then ultimately beat Western brands in the global market with the introduction of successful, high-quality, and technologically sophisticated China-made brands, thereby elevating the Chinese economy» (Tian, Dong 2011, p. 91). Finally, others would like West and East to be economic partners, with foreign corporations wilful to share technology and to adopt Chinese ways. Accordingly, Western brands are ideally seen as harmonious partners of Chinese national brands (for details on the different views on Western brands see Tian, Dong 2011).

### 3 Linguistic Aspects in Chinese Brand Naming

As we mentioned in the introduction, Chinese brand names have some particular features that make them very different from brand names in Western languages. These differences are due to the considerable structural distance between Chinese and European languages; in order to understand them, we will briefly discuss the linguistic features of Chinese relevant for the creation of brand names.

Modern Chinese is characterized by a quasi-perfect correspondence between syllable, character and morpheme, as e.g. 猫 *māo* 'cat',<sup>5</sup> 雪 *xuě* 'snow', 买 *mǎi* 'buy'. However, since in Modern Chinese most morphemes are bound (70% according to Packard 2000), the majority of words are complex, formed by a combination of two or more morphemes (either free

5 The glosses follow the general guidelines of the *Leipzig Glossing Rules* with the addition of the gloss PREF (prefix) and SUFF (suffix).

or bound), corresponding to two or more syllables/characters. In particular, there is a strong preference for disyllabic words, as e.g. 电脑 *diàn-nǎo* 'electricity-brain, computer', 斑马 *bān-mǎ* 'stripe-horse, zebra', which, according to some estimates, account for 80% of the Modern Chinese lexicon (Shi 2002, pp. 70-72).

Thus, as words are mainly formed by combining meaningful units rather than meaningless sounds, Chinese names tend to be more transparent than names in European languages. This difference is reflected in writing systems: European languages are written with a phonographic alphabet, while Chinese makes use of a logographic writing system, in which graphemes (almost always) have a meaning. Thus, in Chinese you cannot dissociate meaning from sound: whereas in a language like English, where syllables do not necessarily correspond to morphemes, one can make up a word without any meaning, in a Chinese made-up word like, say, 肺哄 *fèi-hǒng*, each component has a meaning of its own, respectively 'lung' and 'fool, coax', despite the fact that the word we created as a whole does not make any sense. These differences deeply affect the process of brand naming: in European languages such as English, brand names mostly rely on sound appeal (see e.g. Cohen 1995), while in Chinese semantics plays a key role, and the meaning of the constituents in a name must be chosen wisely. Zhang and Schmitt (2001, p. 323) highlight:

When processing Chinese words, people appear to rely more on visual and/or semantic cues. The opposite is true for English, which is more likely to be processed phonologically. As shown in prior research, these qualitative processes of different writing systems can significantly affect brand recall [...], temporal memory [...], and brand attitudes [...]. In the present research, these qualitative differences in writing systems are shown to affect evaluations of name translations.

An emblematic case in this respect is that of the Chinese translation of the brand name *Coca-Cola*. As highlighted by Li and Shooshtari (2003), in the 1940s the *Coca-Cola* brand name, upon first entering Chinese-speaking markets such as Hong Kong and Shanghai, used to be translated phonetically, with little or no care about the characters used: shopkeepers advertised the drink using characters that sounded similar to *Coca-Cola* but had nonsensical meanings (see Li, Shooshtari 2003; Alon, Littrell, Chan 2009; Fetscherin, Alon, Chan 2012), such as e.g. 可口可蜡 *kě-kǒu-kě-là* 'can-mouth-can-wax', which can be literally translated as 'tasty and "waxable"'.<sup>6</sup> The result was phonetically perfect but the weird and inap-

6 The prefix 可 *kě* 'can' has about the same function as the English suffix *-able/-ible*; see e.g. 可吃 *kě-chī* 'can-eat, edible'; 可笑 *kě-xiào* 'can-laugh, funny, ridiculous, laughable'; 可口 *kě-kǒu* 'can-mouth, tasty, palatable'.

appropriate meaning did not help making the new product attractive. *Coca-Cola*, then, entered the Chinese market again in 1979 with a revised and unified name, i.e. 可口可乐 *kě-kǒu-kě-lè* 'can-mouth-can-happy', which can be translated as 'tasty and enjoyable (= can make you happy)'. This name combines a phonetic adaptation of the original name with a suitable meaning, suggesting that the soft drink has a delicious taste and can make you happy: the pronunciation and the physical and emotional benefits associated to *Coca-Cola* made this name a model for the Chinese rendering of foreign brand names.

Quite to the contrary, the leading Chinese soft drink company 健力宝 *jiàn-lì-bǎo* 'healthy-power-treasure', very successful in China and in Southeast Asia, was not really welcomed in the USA, where the company chose to use the *pinyin* transcription *Jianlibao*. The product was marketed in the USA in 1998 as part of a sport sponsorship campaign, selling only 200,000 cases (Li, Shooshtari 2003). These two examples show that linguistic features and writing systems directly affect brand naming.

Another aspect which should be taken into account is the problem of homophony. Chinese has a very limited number of distinct syllables: if we consider only the segmental level, syllables are around 400; factoring in the tones, syllables reach the number of about 1,200. This number is very limited if compared to English, where there are more than 8,000 different syllables (DeFrancis 1984, p. 42). As a consequence, homophony and near-homophony (as for example homophony at the segmental level) are very common. Take for example 四 *sì* 'four', which is very close to the verb 死 *sǐ* 'die' (same syllable, different tone); unsurprisingly, four is considered to be a very unfavourable number in China. This is a common phenomenon, since the same syllable in Chinese can bear a number of meanings; for example, if we take the syllable *ma* (without considering the tone), some of its possible meanings are: 妈 *mā* 'mother', 马 *mǎ* 'horse', 麻 *má* 'hemp', 骂 *mà* 'curse'. True homophony is also very widespread; a single syllable may correspond to a quite large number of morphemes, as e.g. 力 *lì* 'power', 立 *lì* 'stand', 励 *lì* 'encourage', 历 *lì* 'experience', 梨 *lí* 'pear'. Homophony and near-homophony are less common for disyllabic words, but not rare, as in the case of 马路 *mǎlù* 'road', 马鹿 *mǎlù* 'red deer', 马陆 *mǎlù* 'millipede'. Therefore, in the process of brand naming it is very important to choose characters/morphemes with an appropriate meaning and which do not sound like characters/morphemes with an unpleasant or vulgar meaning. This is important not only for the creation of Chinese brand names, but also for the translation of foreign brand names into Chinese (on the latter, see Chan, Huang 1997; Francis, Lam, Walls 2002; Hong, Pecotich, Schultz 2002; Arcodia, Piccinini 2006). Take for example the brand name *Fanta*, which in Chinese has been translated as 芬达 *fēn-dá* 'fragrance-reach/arrive', a name which somehow recalls the sound of the original name, while providing a positive meaning connected to the taste of the soft drink: with

*Fanta* 'fragrance arrives'. However, by choosing other characters with the same or a similar pronunciation, a completely different result could be obtained, as in 酚达 *fēn-dá* 'phenol-reach/arrive', 坟大 *fén-dà* 'grave-big', 粪瘡 *fèn-da* 'excrement-pimple'.

For these reasons, as said above, standardized brand names usually do not succeed in China, so that companies that want to market their product in China are more or less forced to adapt their name. Even when companies choose not to change their name, there is a strong tendency by the local distributors to find out a Chinese translation by themselves (Li, Shooshtari 2003). In a sense, this can be linked to the creation of Chinese neologisms to translate words from European languages: 'Western' (lexical) modernity is recast in Chinese morphemes, creating «tropes of equivalence in the middle zone of interlinear translation between the host and the guest languages» (Liu 1995, p. 40). Just as any other 外来词 *wàiláicí* (lit. 'word from abroad'), the Chinese version of a brand name is at the same time 'native' and 'foreign', introducing something culturally alien in a captivating fashion, making the brand palatable and digestible for the Chinese consumer.

#### 4 Chinese Brand Names

Languages with a phonographic system allow to form names in a number of different ways, as for example by creating a phonological string, usually relying on the sound appeal (e.g. *Kodak*, *Bref*), by forming acronyms (e.g. *Ikea* 'Ingvar Kamprad Elmtaryd Agunnaryd'), by compounding (*Red Bull*), by borrowing existing words (e.g. *Skipper*), by blending (e.g. *Exencial*, i.e. *executive* + *financial*) or clipping (e.g. *Cat* which stands for *caterpillar*), etc.

In Chinese, brand names are formed mainly by borrowing an existing term, through abbreviation or compounding (see Chan, Huang, Wu 2009).<sup>7</sup> Examples of brand names based on existing terms include common words, such as 解放 *jiěfàng* 'liberation' (trucks), 双喜 *shuāngxǐ* 'double happiness' (electrical equipment), and geographical names (including places of cultural or historical meaning and places where the company is headquartered), as e.g. 珠江 *Zhūjiāng* 'Pearl river' (beer), 中南海 *Zhōngnánhǎi* 'Zhongnanhai' (cigarettes), 哈尔滨 *Hā'ěrbīn* 'Harbin' (beer).

Examples of brand names formed through abbreviation are: 中国一汽

7 Chinese brand names used in this paper mainly come from 品牌汇 *pǐnpái huì* 'brand collection' (<http://www.21sb.org> [2016-03-31]). We also consulted the online database of registered trademarks Searchtmr (<http://www.searchtmr.com/> [2016-03-31]) and the China Patent Trademark Office Trademark Search (<http://www.chinatrado.com/> [2016-03-31]). Other Chinese brand names are drawn from the relevant literature as well as from web searches.

*Zhōngguó yī qì* (from 中国第一汽车集团公司 *Zhōngguó dì yī qìchē jítuán gōngsī* 'Chinese automobile factory No. 1'), 津一 *jīnyī* (from 天津第一机床总厂 *Tiānjīn dì yī jīchuáng zǒngchǎng* 'Tianjin machine-tool industrial complex No. 1').

#### 4.1 Brand Names Formed Through Compounding

Corpus-based studies have shown that the preferred means of brand name formation is compounding (e.g. Chan, Huang 1997, 2001a; Chan, Huang, Wu 2009), which is also the most productive means of word formation in Chinese. See the examples below:

- (1) 白貓 *bái-māo* 'white-cat' (detergent)  
 金威 *jīn-wēi* 'gold-power' (beer)  
 吉康 *jí-kāng* 'lucky-healthy' (flasks and kettles)  
 五粮液 *wǔ-liáng-yè* 'five-grain-liquid' (liquor)

The most common type of compounds found among brand names are modifier-head compounds (Chan, Huang 1997, 2001a; Chan, Huang, Wu 2009), though other compound types can be found too, such as the above mentioned 吉康 *jí-kāng* 'lucky and healthy', a coordinate form.

The types of brand names illustrated above do not exhaust the range of possibilities; other strategies are used as well, as, for instance, derivation: 思想者 *sīxiǎng-zhě* 'thought-SUFF, thinker', where 者 *-zhě* is an agentive suffix; 超美 *chāo-měi* 'super-beautiful', where the prefix 超 *chāo-* is used. Some brand names are based on reduplicated forms:

- (2) 大大 *dà-dà* 'big-big' (doors)  
 加加 *jiā-jiā* 'add-add' (foodstuff)  
 露露 *lù-lù* 'syrup-syrup' (fruit juice)

In some cases, brand names are formed by a combination of reduplication and compounding, such as:

- (3) 笑笑教育 *xiào-xiào-jiàoyù* 'smile-smile-education'  
 (child training institution)  
 贝贝猫 *bèi-bèi-māo* 'shell-shell-cat' (home textile)

In the last example above, the reduplicated form 贝贝 *bèi-bèi* aims at imitating the English word *baby*, so that the name is to be understood as *baby cat*. As a matter of fact, the brand name is accompanied by the English

name *Baby Cat*. In some cases triplicated forms can be found too, as in 伞伞伞业 *sǎn-sǎn-sǎn-yè* 'umbrella-umbrella-umbrella-enterprise' (umbrellas).

Furthermore, some brand names have the form of (pseudo-)phrases:

- (4) 安达 *ān dá* 'security reach/arrive, security arrives' (doors)  
 家家笑 *jiā-jīā xiào* 'family-family smile, every family smiles'  
 (garbage processing equipment)  
 我爱我家 *wǒ ài wǒ jiā* 'I love I family/home/house, I love my home'  
 (clothes-racks)

We may remark that the verb 达 *dá*, usually suggesting some sort of benefit brought by the product or service, is very common in Chinese brand names, as well as in Chinese translations of foreign brands (see Arcodia, Piccinini 2006).

Generally speaking, names made of two syllables, which are easier to memorize and recall, are the most common, followed by three-syllable names (see Lü 2005; Chan, Huang, Wu 2009); note that the disyllable is not only the preferred word form in Modern Chinese, as said above, but also the minimal prosodic word (see Feng 1998). Longer forms can be found too, such as 浪漫一生 *làngmàn yīshēng* 'romantic life' (clothes racks), 快乐主妇 *kuàilè zhǔfū* 'happy housewife' (clothes racks). In contrast, monosyllabic brand names are not common at all. If a monosyllabic name is chosen, it is usually followed by the word 牌 *pái* 'brand' (see Lü 2005), forming a disyllabic name, as in 红牌 *hóng-pái* 'red-brand' (electrical equipment), or 虎牌 *hǔ-pái* 'tiger-brand' (beer); since the disyllable is the minimal prosodic word, as said above, a single syllable is prosodically deficient, which means that it cannot constitute a prosodic word of its own and is, thus, dispreferred.

#### 4.2 Modified *chéngyǔ*

We will now focus on brand names based on *chéngyǔ* (成语). *Chéngyǔ*, usually translated as 'idiom(s)', are four-character set phrases. In some cases their meaning can be inferred from their constituents, as in the case of 半信半疑 *bàn-xìn-bàn-yí* 'half-believe-half-doubt, doubtful', but many of them originate from historical incidents, legends, the classics or literary works, so that in order to understand their meaning one must know these sources, as with 朝三暮四 *zhāo-sān-mù-sì* 'morning-three-evening-four, hoodwink the gullible, play fast and loose, be fickle'.<sup>8</sup> *Chéngyǔ* are widespread in Chinese and are very important from the cultural point of view. In syntax,

8 This *chéngyǔ* originates from *Zhuangzi* 莊子, where it is narrated the story of a monkey trainer who went to his monkeys and said: «What about if I give you three acorns in the morning and four in the evening?». On hearing this the monkeys got angry. Thus, the monkey

they behave as common lexemes, but are more vivid and expressive; as highlighted by Ji (1982, p. 56), *chéngyǔ* are «a widely favoured and highly flexible rhetorical device very typical of Chinese phraseology».

Some brand names are formed by borrowing existing *chéngyǔ*, such as 不亦乐乎 *bùyìlèhū* ‘extremely, awfully (orig. ‘isn’t that a joy?’)’ (children home textile). However, here we want to focus on another way of using *chéngyǔ* in brand naming, i.e. the use of modified versions of *chéngyǔ*, creating puns. This strategy is quite widespread in advertising (see Cao, Gao 2009) and consists in replacing one or more characters of a *chéngyǔ* with one or more homophonous characters, usually connected with the advertised product. For example, see the slogans below (Cao, Gao 2009, pp. 166-167):

- (5) 一箭如故, 一箭钟情  
*yī-jiàn-rúgù, yī-jiàn-zhōngqíng*  
 one-arrow-be.as.before, one-arrow-fall.in.love  
 天尝地酒  
*tiān-cháng-dì-jiǔ*  
 sky-taste-earth-wine

The first slogan in (5) for the chewing gum 箭牌 *jiàn-pái* ‘arrow-brand’ (the Chinese version of the brand name *Wrigley*) immediately recalls two *chéngyǔ*, i.e. 一见如故 *yī-jiàn-rú-gù* ‘feel like old friends at first meeting, take to each other at once’ and 一见钟情 *yī-jiàn-zhōng-qíng* ‘fall in love at first sight’, which are pronounced exactly as the two expressions in the slogan, the only difference being that the character 见 *jiàn* ‘see, meet.with’ has been replaced by the homophonous character 箭 *jiàn* ‘arrow’, i.e. the name of the advertised chewing gum. The aim is to make this product very attractive: even though it is the first time you come into contact with it, you will fall in love with it (Cao, Gao 2009). In this way, the original meanings of the *chéngyǔ* are preserved and linked to the product. The second slogan, which advertises a brand of spirits, recalls the *chéngyǔ* 天长地久 *tiān-cháng-dì-jiǔ* ‘everlasting and unchanging’. In this *chéngyǔ* two characters have been replaced by homophonous characters: 长 *cháng* ‘long, lasting’ is replaced by 尝 *cháng* ‘taste’, while 久 *jiǔ* ‘for a long time’ is replaced by 酒 *jiǔ* ‘wine’, making reference to the product. In this way the slogan stresses the long history of these spirits and, at the same time, expresses the wish of the company to establish a long lasting friendship with consumers (Cao, Gao 2009).

This strategy is sometimes used in brand naming too, as shown in (6).

trainer said: «What do you think if I give you four acorns in the morning and three in the evening?». The monkeys were satisfied, though the total number of acorns was the same.



- (6) 食全食美 (foodstuff)  
*shí-quán-shí-měi*  
 eat-whole-eat-beautiful
- 一步到胃 (medicine)  
*yī-bù-dào-wèi*  
 one-step-arrive/to-stomach

The first brand name is modelled after the *chéngyǔ* 十全十美 *shíquánshíměi* 'perfect in every way', in which the character 十 *shí* 'ten, complete', appearing twice in the *chéngyǔ*, is replaced by the homophonous character 食 *shí* 'eat', connected to the products. In this way the name stresses the quality of these products, which are 'absolutely perfect'.

The second example in (6) is the brand name of a medicine for stomach trouble. The name recalls the *chéngyǔ* 一步到位 *yībùdàowèi* 'complete a task at one time; finish doing something that would take a long time at one time'. The character 位 *wèi* 'place' was replaced by 胃 *wèi* 'stomach', i.e. the organ which this medicine is supposed to heal. Thus, the idea conveyed by the name is that this medicine will help your stomach very quickly.

During the Cultural Revolution, which aimed at destroying everything of old (i.e. pre-socialistic) China, *chéngyǔ* were reframed in the new contexts of usage of the period (e.g. public criticism meetings) and commonly used as formulaic language; Mao himself was fond of traditional Chinese formulae, and even created a *chéngyǔ* as 不破不立 *bù-pò-bù-lì* 'no-broken-no-erect, without destruction there can be no construction' (Ji 2004, pp. 166-167). This shows that *chéngyǔ*, despite being set phrases, can be used creatively and reframed in new contexts, which is what happens when they are used in advertisements and brand naming.<sup>9</sup>

9 Note, however, that recently the Chinese government has banned the use of modified *chéngyǔ* in the media. On 27 November 2014 the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television issued the document «关于广播电视节目和广告中规范使用国家通用语言文字的通知» (Notice on Regulating the Usage of the National Common Language and Script in Radio and Television Programs and Advertising), in which it is said that practices such as distorted usage of idioms are not in compliance with basic requirements of laws and regulations, such as e.g. the 中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法 (National Common Language and Script Law), and are contrary to the spirit of transmitting and promoting outstanding traditional Chinese culture. The use of modified *chéngyǔ* may mislead the public, especially minors, and therefore must be resolutely corrected ([http://www.sarft.gov.cn/art/2014/11/27/art\\_113\\_4781.html](http://www.sarft.gov.cn/art/2014/11/27/art_113_4781.html) [2016-01-31]).

### 4.3 Acronyms and Initialisms

Some Chinese brand names are formed by using letters of the Latin alphabet. The first group is formed by acronyms/initialisms (see Basciano 2015), as e.g.:

- (7) DMTG (machine-tools)
- LZ (road construction machinery)
- BYD (cars)

DMTG is the name of 大连机床集团 *Dàlián jīchuáng jítuán* (*Dalian Machine Tool Group Corp.*). The name is formed from English, taking the first sound/letter of the words *Dalian Machine Tool Group*.

As for the name LZ, apparently it derives from the romanized Chinese name of the company, i.e. 辽阳筑路机械有限公司 *Liáoyáng zhù-lù jīxiè yǒuxiàn gōngsī* 'Liaoyang build-road machine limited company', choosing the first letter of 辽阳 *Liáoyáng* 'Liaoyang' and the first letter of 筑路 *zhù-lù* 'build-road'. The initialism LZ is accompanied by a Chinese name formed by the characters 辽筑 *Liáo-zhù*, which is the abbreviation of 辽阳筑路 *Liáoyáng zhù-lù*. In a similar way, the name BYD can be traced back to the romanized name 比亚迪 *bǐ-yà-dí* 'compare-Asia-enlighten'. However, in this case, we may hypothesize that the initialism BYD was created first and then matching characters were chosen; as a matter of fact, the meanings of the characters chosen apparently have no connection with the kind of company and its products. Moreover, the characters composing this name do not seem to have any particularly appealing meaning; the name sounds like a phonetic translation of a foreign brand name (see 5.2). In addition, it is worth noting that the English slogan of the company is *Build your dreams*; thus, possibly, the initialism was created from this slogan (but the reverse could also be true, i.e. that the slogan was created starting from the name BYD). It appears that the aim of the company was to create a foreign-like name (see 4.5), possibly with the aim of entering foreign markets. As a matter of fact, the BYD company currently has branches in Asia, Africa, Northern Europe and in the USA.

There are some special cases too, which consist of acronyms/initialisms whose origin is not clear (see Basciano 2015). See the examples below:

- (8) LINIX (electrical machinery)
- ZOJE (sewing machines)
- SORL (auto parts)
- PLC (auto systems)

The name LINIX may be considered an acronym-like name. However, it is not clear what it stands for; actually, the name of the company is 横店集团联谊电机 *héngdiàn jítuán liányí diànjī*, thus the first part of the name LINIX, LI, could be traced back to the first part of the syllable 联 *lián*, composing the word 联谊 *liányí* 'friendship ties', while NI could stand for the last part of the word 联谊 *liányí*, but we have no clues as to the origin of the X. Hence, this could also be regarded as a creation of a foreign-like name (see 4.5), possibly taking somehow into account also the Chinese name of the company.

As for ZOJE, all the letters composing the name can be traced back to the first two syllables of the name of the company, 中捷缝纫机 *zhōngjié fèngrènjī*, but their selection does not follow any obvious pattern along the initial/rhyme boundaries within these syllables. In SORL, 'R' and 'L' possibly stand for the initials of the first two syllables of the name of the company, 瑞立集团 *ruìlì jítuán*, but they are preceded by two other unrelated letters, 'S' and 'O', the origin of which is unclear. Finally, we have no hint as to where the initialism PLC (PLC 集团 'PLC Group') comes from.

Thus, some brand names are modelled after acronyms/initialisms, but they cannot be considered as true acronyms/initialisms, since they are not (completely) based on a specific group of words, picking up some of its phonemes/syllables.

In some cases, the brand name is formed by an initialism followed by Chinese characters, forming a hybrid form similar to those found in the translation of foreign brand names into Chinese (see 5.6), as e.g. ZTE 中兴 *Zhōngxīng* (telecommunications), where ZTE stands for Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment (中兴通讯 *zhōngxīng tōngxùn*), while 中兴 *zhōngxīng* is the Chinese name of the company.

Different is the case of abbreviations formed on the basis of the romanized Chinese name, as e.g. HSK or RMB (see the case of LZ, from 辽筑 *Liáo-zhù*, seen above). Kim (2012) highlights that despite the fact that these words look like all the other words formed only by Latin letters, in that they are read with English pronunciation, they are different because they were created in China and they can be explained only starting from Chinese. These words are considered as graphic loans by Kim (2012), and hence they are included in the same category as Japanese graphic loans (see 5.4).

The brand naming strategy considered in this section seems to be mainly adopted by companies interested in exporting their products, since acronyms/initialisms may be easily used in foreign markets; as a matter of fact, most of the companies in our sample market their products abroad. This kind of names seems to reflect the opening of Chinese markets and the resulting strong competition; Chinese brands started to compete directly with international brands, and therefore struggled to create brand names that look global (see section 2).

#### 4.4 Alphanumeric and Other Brand Names Containing Digits and Letters

Besides acronyms/initialisms, in China we find alphanumeric brand names too, as e.g.:

- (9) 5A (toothbrushes)  
 OK8 (liquid crystal glue)  
 555 (batteries and cigarettes)

There are also brand names formed by a combination of Chinese characters and Latin letters or digits, as e.g.:

- (10) 三A sān A 'three A' (playing cards)  
 男露888 nán-lù 888 'man-dew/nectar 888' (personal hygiene products)  
 美美BB měi-měi BB 'beautiful-beautiful BB' (rechargeable batteries)  
 A家家具 A jiā jiājù 'A home.furniture' (home furniture)

As highlighted by Boyd (1985), alphanumeric brand names can be chosen for different reasons: a short life cycle for the product, making the costs for researching and identifying suitable brand names excessive; emergence of technology; lack of new words; variation in product models; need for a brand name that can be used also in foreign markets (see also Ang 1997). It has been observed that certain letters appear more frequently as the first letters of the top brand names than others (Schloss 1981) and that alphanumeric brand names are considered to be more fitting for technical rather than non-technical products (Boyd 1985; Pavia, Costa 1993; Ang 1997).

The choice of numbers in Chinese brand naming takes into account their cultural significance. Numbers had an important role in ancient Chinese culture:

numbers in ancient Chinese culture consisted of Xiangshu (philosophical image numbers) and Shushu (divination numbers), which had three intermingled basic functions – calculation, divination and philosophical interpretation – to intertwine perception and intuition with emotion, space with time, heaven with earth, *yang* with *yin* (Han, Wang, Xue 2011, p. 69).

In the *Yìjīng* 易經 'Books of Changes', one of the Five Classics, which is an essential source of the Chinese cosmological thought, odd numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 are *yáng* 阳 (masculine), while even numbers 2, 4, 6, 8 are *yīn* 阴 (female); the interaction and combination of these two forces (*yīn* and *yáng*) constitutes the continuous transformations of the whole world (Han,

Wang, Xue 2011). Thus, when a number is formed by more than one digit, a balance of *yīn* and *yáng* is preferred (Ang 1997).

The meanings associated to numerals, and thus their perception as positive or negative, are connected to several different sources (see e.g. Tao 2013). Furthermore, numerals are perceived as auspicious or ominous according to their pronunciation, which can recall homophonous words or words with a similar pronunciation (see section 3 above). Thus, for example, number 8 (八 *bā*) is considered as an auspicious number since it sounds similar to 发 *fā* 'to prosper' (see e.g. the New Year's greeting 恭喜发财 *gōngxǐ fā-cái* 'wish you great fortune; wish you prosperity'; lit. 'congratulations/greetings make-money').<sup>10</sup> To give an example of the importance of the number 8, the opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympic games in Beijing began on August 8 (08-08-08) at 8 minutes and 8 seconds past 8 PM. A combination of more than one 8 (see the example in 10 above) is particularly auspicious, as it can be connected to 发发发 *fā fā fā* 'get richer and richer'. Other lucky numbers are 3 (see e.g.: 三代 *Sān-Dài* 'Three dynasties', i.e. Xia, Shang and Zhou, the most ancient dynasties; 三教 *Sān Jiào* 'Three Doctrines', i.e. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism), 5 (see e.g.: 五行 *wǔ-xíng* 'Five elements/phases/agents', i.e. wood, fire, earth, metal and water; 五德 *wǔ dé* 'Five virtues'), 6, 9 (it sounds like 久 *jiǔ* 'for a long time, everlasting').

In contrast, number 4, as mentioned above, is an ominous number, since it is a near-homonym of 死 *sǐ* 'die' (see section 3); in buildings, hospitals, etc. the number 4 is often missing (no fourth floor or bed no. 4, for example).<sup>11</sup> Another unlucky number is 7: in choosing auspicious dates, 7, 17 and 27 are avoided. According to Tao (2013) one of the reasons for this has to do with the tradition of offering sacrifices to dead people every day until the 49th day (seven times seven); among these days, the most important ones are the seventh day (the first seven), the 21st day (the third seven) and the 49th day (the seventh seven). Liu and Dong (2007) highlights that the number 7 is traditionally connected to death (see the source for examples). Moreover, Liu and Dong (2007) and Han, Wang and Xue (2011) point out that the number 7 (七 *qī*) is considered unlucky because it is close to 气 *qì*

<sup>10</sup> Ang (1997) highlights other reasons why the number 8 is considered a lucky number: for example, standing in the centre of the universe, one can face eight directions, i.e. North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, West, and Northwest, thus suggesting omnipotence. Eight can also refer to the legendary Eight Immortals, who are said to have achieved immortality through meditation. Furthermore, Chinese also believe that the personality and fate of people can be interpreted based on the eight characters attached to their own year, month, day and time of birth.

<sup>11</sup> Other unpleasant associations with the number 4 include the four bad habits of wine drinking, women chasing, money chasing, and smoking, and the four kings who were of ill-repute before being converted to Buddhism (Ang 1997).

'get angry'.<sup>12</sup> However, Tao (2013) points out that 7 is considered a good number in hospitals, possibly because it sounds similar to 祛 *qū* 'dispel, remove', thus having the meaning of 'get rid of the illness'. Furthermore, Liu and Dong (2007) remark that 7 is also considered a mystical number in ancient Chinese culture: for example, according to Chinese mythology, the goddess *Nüwa* 女媧 completed her creation work in seven days, and the Jade Emperor had seven fairy daughters (for further examples see Liu, Dong 2007). We may add that the seventh day of the seventh month of the traditional lunar calendar is the 七夕节 *qīxījié* 'double seven festival', that celebrates the annual meeting of the cowherd and the weaver girl in Chinese mythology,<sup>13</sup> and it is considered as the Chinese Valentine's day.

Providing a detailed picture of the cultural meanings of numbers is far beyond the scope of this paper. However, what we want to stress is that, given the Chinese concern with fortune and luck, and the meanings attached to numbers, it is very important to carefully choose numbers within brand names: numbers influence brand perception, and favourable perception of a number is defined in terms of whether it is considered to bring good fortune or not (Ang 1997). Furthermore, it should be noted that combinations of single-digit numbers may convey different meanings. For example, in idioms a combination of seven and eight is generally associated with chaos and disorder (see Tao 2013): e.g. 乱七八糟 *luàn-qī-bā-zāo* 'in disorder-seven-eight-messy, at sixes and sevens, in a mess', 七手八脚 *qī-shǒu-bā-jiǎo* 'seven-hand-eight-foot, everyone pitching in, too many cooks spoil the broth'. Thus, in the creation of brand names one must also take into account the meanings borne by number combinations.

Chan, Huang and Wu (2009), basing on their analysis of 5,089 Chinese brand names, show that the nine numbers which are used most often in brand naming are, in order of frequency: 三 *sān* 'three', 双 *shuāng* 'two/pair', 万 *wàn* 'ten thousand', 五 *wǔ* 'five', 九 *jiǔ* 'nine', 八 *bā* 'eight', 一 *yī* 'one', 百 *bǎi* 'hundred', 七 *qī* 'seven'.

While Chinese are influenced by numbers, the same cannot be said about letters, which are conceptually very distant from Chinese logographic writing. Ang (1997), basing on an experimental study, shows that Chinese consumers are indeed more influenced by numbers than by letters. However, as we have shown above, brand names formed with letters are found too. In her study, Ang (1997) shows that A and S are considered to be lucky letters, while F and Z are regarded as unlucky letters. As for the letter A, the reason seems to be quite intuitive: it is the first letter of

12 Note, however, that the original meaning of 气 *qì* is 'vital/material energy'.

13 This is the story of 织女 *Zhīnǚ* (the weaver girl) and 牛郎 *Niúlánɡ* (the cowherd). Their love was not allowed and they were banished to opposite sides of the Silver River. They can meet only once a year, the seventh day of the seventh lunar month.

the alphabet and an A grade for students means excellence (Ang 1997). In contrast, F is the last grade and stands for failure in the educational system, while Z is the last letter of the alphabet. Ang shows that brand names with lucky letters and numbers are perceived more favourably than those containing unlucky letters and numbers: consumers make inferences about products on the base of their brand names, and brand names with lucky letters and numbers are perceived as being auspicious, successful and having superior quality.

In (9) and (10), we have examples of combinations of lucky letters and numbers (5A and 三A *sān A* 'three A'). We also find the letter A to signify excellence in A家具 *A jiā jiājù* (furniture for excellent houses). Latin letters can be chosen for other reasons too; in OK8 we find the English colloquial word *ok*, which conveys assent, agreement or acceptance. In the name 美美 BB *měi měi BB* (batteries), built playing on reduplication patterns, instead, the letter B recalls the first letter of the English word *battery*.

Since, as said above, Chinese are more easily influenced by numbers than letters, Ang (1997, p. 229) suggests that a name will be perceived more favourably if letters are associated to numbers: «a restaurant called Paradise can be perceived more favourably if it were called Paradise 8».

However, Ang also shows that Chinese favour proper brand names over alphanumeric ones. This could be the reason why we often find characters combined with numbers or letters (as in the examples in 10).

#### 4.5 Foreign and Foreign-sounding Names

Among Chinese brand names we can find foreign-sounding names. As highlighted by Tian and Dong (2011, p. 59), in China there is «a proliferation of domestic goods branded to convey Westernness and capitalize on presumed positive associations». Examples of such names are: 诺菲娅 *nuò-fēi-yà* 'promise-luxuriant-brother.in.law' (women shoes), 爱丽丝 *ài-lí-sī* 'love-beautiful-silk' (jewelry). These names are not structurally analysable, since they are built as if they were the phonetic translation of a foreign name. Furthermore, as can be seen from the glosses, these names do not suggest the function and quality of products, nor do they make reference to fortune, but seem to aim at attracting consumers, especially young women «with a connotation of exoticism, stylishness, romance, richness, or uniqueness» (Chan, Huang, Wu 2009, pp. 9-10). As a matter of fact, Tian and Dong (2011) highlight that the perceived technological advantage of Western brands is linked not only to electronic goods but also to cosmetics and beauty aids, which are recognized as based on modern science. Furthermore, according to Croll (2006), after the economic reforms, Western clothing, jewelry and cosmetic brands provided a sense of freedom and movement and were used to construct a new gender identity in contrast with the Mao-era 'iron girls'

in the unisex blue suits. Also, they were an instrument to move towards becoming more progressive, cosmopolitan or global.

However, while usually the characters forming these names are neutral and do not make reference to the product, as in the above mentioned 诺菲娅 *nuò-fēi-yà* or in 欧兰特 *ōu-lán-tè* 'Europe-orchid-special' (household appliances),<sup>14</sup> in some cases characters are selected to suggest positive meanings: for example, in 爱丽丝 *ài-lí-sī* (see above), the characters belongs to the semantic area of beauty and intimacy, very common for female products (see Chan, Huang, Wu 2009).

The process for the formation of these brand names seems to be as follows: companies first choose a foreign or foreign-sounding name and then look for matching characters, forming a Chinese brand name which looks like a translation of a foreign brand name into Chinese (see 5.2 and 5.3). This seems to be confirmed by the children clothing brand name *Paclantic* (a blend of *Pacific* and *Atlantic*), created by a Taiwanese business man, which is accompanied by the Chinese name 派克兰帝 *pài-kè-lán-dì* 'send-gram-orchid-emperor' (phonetic adaptation of *Paclantic*). The Chinese name appears in all marketing activities. That the brand plays up Westernness is apparent by ads where Caucasian children are used as models (see Tian, Dong 2011, p. 127). Another example, is 纳爱斯 *nà-ài-sī* 'receive-love-this', the brand name of a manufacturer of cleaning products, which is clearly a phonetic adaptation of the English word *nice*; indeed, this word is used as the English version of the brand name. Sometimes the choice of a foreign-sounding name seems to be part of a strategy connected to the aim of the international orientation of the company, as in the case of the just mentioned 纳爱斯 *nà-ài-sī* (*Nice*); indeed, many of the company's goods are marketed in several countries in Europe, USA, Oceania, Southeast Asia, Africa.<sup>15</sup>

When a company chooses a foreign-sounding brand name, usually the name has both a version in Latin letters and in Chinese characters, as e.g. *Orlant* (欧兰特 *ōu-lán-tè*), *Paclantic* (派克兰帝 *pài-kè-lán-dì*), *Yinlyps* (英利菩 *yīng-lì-pú*), *Nuofeya* (诺菲娅 *nuò-fēi-yà*) and *Alice* (爱丽丝 *ài-lí-sī*) seen above. Other examples are shown below:

- (11) *Victor* 维可陶 *wéi-kě-táo* 'preserve-can-pottery' (sanitary fixtures)  
*Solid* 索力得 *suǒ-lì-dé* 'rope-power-obtain' (welding wires)

<sup>14</sup> We may remark that 兰 *lán* 'orchid' is a nature-related character, often used in Chinese brand names (see next section) as well as in the adaptations of foreign brand names (5.7). The character 特 *tè* 'special' too is commonly chosen in the adaptations of foreign brand names and it is related to prestige and excellence. Finally, 欧 *ōu* 'Europe' is a recurrent character in the translation of foreign brand names.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.cnnice.com/about/about1.htm> (2016-03-31).



*Onda* 昂达 *áng-dá* 'hold (one's head).high-reach/arrive' (electronics)

In the examples above, it clearly appears that the Chinese version of the name is simply the phonetic adaptation of the foreign or foreign-sounding name. In the case of *Onda* 昂达 *áng-dá*, apparently the source is the Spanish/Portuguese/Italian noun *onda* 'wave'. The characters chosen are often neutral and not related to the kind of product or to the company. However, sometimes reference to the product, to its characteristics or qualities is made. For example, in the name *Solid* 索力得 *suǒ-lì-dé*, 索 *suǒ* means 'rope' (possibly referring to wires), while 力 *lì* 'power, strength' seems to evoke the solidity of these welding wires, which is suggested by the English name too.

There are also instances of brand names modelled on foreign names lacking a Chinese counterpart, as e.g. *Allwell* (floors). Another example is *Mymo* (which stands for *my moments*), a women clothing brand aimed at fashionable urban women from the age of 22 to 40, whose design team is composed from experts from France, Portugal and China.<sup>16</sup> Again, the choice of a foreign-sounding brand name seems to be connected to one of the two main reasons highlighted above: 1) international orientation of the company;<sup>17</sup> 2) targeting a particular group of consumers, especially young women.

In yet other cases, Chinese and foreign language (near-)equivalents of a brand name are used side by side, as e.g. *Susino* 梅花 *méihuā* (umbrellas),<sup>18</sup> where 梅花 *méihuā* means 'plum blossom' and *susino* is an Italian word meaning 'plum tree'. This strategy is avoided when the translated name could be associated to a negative image in Chinese culture: for instance, a Cantonese leather goods brand chose an English name, i.e. *Fortune Duck*, which is reminiscent of the Italian brand *Mandarina Duck*.<sup>19</sup> The English name was not translated into Chinese as 幸运鸭 *xìngyùn yā* 'fortune duck': according to Zhao (2007), this is due to the fact that duck is regarded as a negative symbol, alluding to a man who lives off a woman (Zhao 2007). Therefore, the name 科春得 *kē-chūn-dé* 'discipline-spring-reach' was cho-

16 <http://vip.china-ef.com/web/MYMOMENT/> (2016-06-21).

17 For instance, export represents 99% of *Allwell's* trade: [http://allwell.co.chinafloor.cn/Index\\_base.htm](http://allwell.co.chinafloor.cn/Index_base.htm) (2016-03-31).

18 *Susino* umbrellas are exported in more than 100 countries and territories: <http://www.susino.com/en/about.asp> (2016-03-31).

19 The story of this brand name is as follows: in 1998 Mr Benjamin Tam, the creator of the brand, went to Italy with his wife. When the trip was about to finish, she chose for him a leather belt as souvenir. He was fascinated by the drawing of a little duck on the belt and decided to use a duck as the symbol of his leatherware trademark (<http://fortuneduck2011.cn.makepolo.com/corp/corp.html> [2016-01-31]).

sen, probably because these characters are pronounced as *fo1-ceon1-dak1* in Cantonese, thus being a phonetic adaptation of the original word.

A different strategy has been chosen for the name *Lianovation* 联创光电 *lián-chuàng-guāngdiàn* 'unite-create/initiate-photoelectricity' (LED-technology products). *Lianovation* is apparently a blend of *lian* (the Chinese romanization of 联 *lián* without the tone marker) and *innovation*. In this respect we may suppose that 创 *chuàng* in the Chinese name is the abbreviation of 创新 *chuàngxīn* 'innovation'; thus, *Lianovation* would be formed by blending part of the Chinese name (i.e. 联 *lián*) with the English translation of 创新 *chuàngxīn* 'innovation'.

The origin of some foreign-sounding names, like those in (12), is unclear. They are apparently formed by simply scrambling letters, approximately matching the pronunciation of the characters used in the Chinese version of the name, or some of its sounds.

- (12) *Dsland* 迪士兰 *dí-shì-lán* 'enlighten-scholar-orchid' (baby products)  
*Fotile* 方太 *fāng-tài* 'square-excessively' (kitchen appliances)  
*Vatti* 华帝 *huá-dì* 'China-emperor' (kitchen appliances)

There are two possible routes to the creation of such names: either the foreign-sounding name is created first and then matching characters are found, or the other way round; normally, we have no way of knowing which of the two was chosen for each of them. However, in some cases, like *Fotile* 方太 *fāng-tài* or *Dsland* 迪士兰 *dí-shì-lán*, we may hypothesize that the foreign-sounding name was created first: the characters are neutral, not connected to the type of product, and without any auspicious meaning; they resemble phonetic adaptations of foreign brand names (see 5.2 and 5.3). In particular, it can be noted that the first part of the name *Dsland* 迪士兰 *dí-shì-lán* is strongly reminiscent of the Chinese version of the American brand name *Disney* 迪士尼 *dí-shì-ní* 'enlighten-scholar-Buddhist nun'.<sup>20</sup>

In some cases the Chinese name and the foreign-sounding name are completely independent of each other, as e.g. *Caml* 加枫 *jiā-fēng* 'add-maple' (bathrooms). This name does not match the Chinese name either from the phonetic or from the semantic point of view. Furthermore, *Caml* has a difficult pronunciation due to the final *ml*, unless it is read as an initialism.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that there are some attempts to name Chinese brands after famous foreign brand names (both phonetic adaptations in Chinese and original names in Latin letters), for different kinds of products, as e.g. 路易威登 *lùyì wēidēng* (blowtorches), 古驰 *gǔchí* (household

20 It can be further observed that the pronunciation of 迪士兰 *dí-shì-lán* also recalls the name *Disneyland* (in Chinese 迪士尼乐园 *díshìní lèyuán* 'Disney park').

appliances), *Ralph Lauren* (paints), *Apple* (machinery oil). The registration of these trademarks is not always successful and often controversies arise. China is a first-to-file country: all else being equal, whoever applies for a trademark first, will obtain the registration. It is important to register trademarks in all the appropriate product classes to ensure protection. As a matter of fact, according to the Trademark Law of the People's Republic of China,<sup>21</sup> the exclusive right to use a trademark is limited to the classes of products for which the trademark has been approved.

#### 4.6 Further Remarks

Semantically, Chinese brand names tend to have a positive connotation, though names formed by characters with a neutral connotation can be found too, especially in some categories of products (see Chan, Huang 1997, 2001a) or in foreign-sounding brand names, as discussed above. In order to understand Chinese brand names, it is important to take into account the cultural background and the importance given to symbolic implications of good wishes and fortune (Chan 1990, Schmitt, Pan 1994). Chan, Huang and Wu (2009, p. 13), relying on their corpus-based study found out some recurring words in Chinese brand names, which can be classified into five groups according to their meaning (see also Basciano 2015):

- a. nature-related words such as 山 *shān* 'mountain', 天 *tiān* 'sky', 花 *huā* 'flower', 松 *sōng* 'pine', 龙 *lóng* 'dragon', 马 *mǎ* 'horse'. Nature symbolizes strength and power, and in some cases reflects perfection;
- b. fortune-related words, such as 吉 *jí* 'lucky', 福 *fú* 'fortune', 瑞 *ruì* 'auspicious', 发 *fā* 'to prosper' (see 4.4). These words reflect the importance of auspicious symbols in Chinese culture;
- c. beauty and intimacy related words, as e.g. 爱 *ài* 'love', 美 *měi* 'beauty', 丝 *sī* 'silk', 香 *xiāng* 'fragrant', 雅 *yǎ* 'elegant'. These words suggest positive images, and are elegant and appealing. They are quite common, for example, in cosmetics and products for women;
- d. colours, as e.g. 红 *hóng* 'red', 绿 *lǜ* 'green', 青 *qīng* 'green', 黄 *huáng* 'yellow', 蓝 *lán* 'blue'. In Chinese culture, yellow represents richness and power; red stands for happiness; green represents youth and freshness; white symbolizes purity and elegance;<sup>22</sup> and blue stands for peacefulness (Chan, Huang, Wu 2009, p. 13);
- e. numerals (see 4.4 above).

21 Article 51: <http://www.chinatradeoffice.com/about/laws1.html> (2016-03-31).

22 Note, however, that white also symbolizes mourning in China.

Furthermore, brand names often contain characters that allude to the characteristics and qualities of the products or services: for example, bicycle brand names (13) often make use of words related to strength and speed (as e.g. names of animals), while names of drinks (14) often contain characters related to water and/or coldness (Chan, Huang 1997, 2001b; Huang, Chan 1997).

- (13) 野马 *yě-mǎ* 'wild-horse'  
 金狮 *jīn-shī* 'gold-lion'  
 飞鸽 *fēi-gē* 'fly-pigeon'
- (14) 冷泉 *lěng-quán* 'cold-spring'  
 冰飘山 *bīng-piāo-shān* 'ice-float-mountain'  
 雪洋 *xuě-yáng* 'snow-ocean'

To give another example, in our sample names of products such as clothes racks often have characters referring to women, wives, housewives, such as:

- (15) 快乐主妇 *kuàilè-zhǔfù* 'happy-housewife'  
 吉祥太太 *jíxiáng-tàitai* 'lucky-madam/wife'  
 乖媳妇 *guāi xífù* 'well-behaved, daughter-in-law'

According to Schmitt and Pan (1994), names formed by more than one character must be analysed at different levels, e.g. the meaning of the name as a whole, of its constituent characters and of the semantic components of each character, to create an appropriate name and avoid negative associations.

Lastly, corpus-based studies have shown that in Chinese brand naming there is a strong preference for disyllabic names in which the second syllable has a 'high' tone (first or second tone). According to Chan and Huang (1997, 2001a), high-toned syllables have a high pitch and, thus, are more sonorous and are also easy to pronounce: Chinese people seem to have a strong preference for names that can be pronounced sonorously, as sonority can result in a pleasant pronunciation, and this may enhance memorization and help generate a favourable perception of the brand (Chan, Huang 2001a, 2001b; see also Wu, Lu, Su 2010).

## 5 Translation of Foreign Brand Names into Chinese

As proposed by Hong (et al. 2002), there are five brand naming strategy options to enter the East- and Southeast Asian markets (see Jaw, Wang, Hsu 2011, p. 647):

1. entering the market with a global (original) brand. This strategy may take advantage of the positive associations connected to Western products, such as the perceived higher quality;
2. entering the market with a transliterated brand. This strategy allows to recall the original sound of the brand adapting it to the characteristics of the host language;
3. entering the market with a directly translated brand. This strategy emphasizes the meaning of the brand;
4. entering the market with a combination of the original brand and a transliterated name;
5. entering the market with a combination of the original brand and the directly translated name.

As already discussed in section 3, standardized brand names are generally not well accepted in the Chinese market, due to linguistic and cultural differences. According to Schmitt and Pan (1994), the choice of Western firms of keeping their original name with Western spelling, adopting a one/single brand name strategy (i.e. only one name all over the world)<sup>23</sup> may be appropriate in Japan, where consumers are familiar with the Latin alphabet, but not in the Chinese market, where only a minority of consumers knows the Latin alphabet. Thus, choosing a localized brand name to enter the Chinese market appears to be a very wise strategy. Despite of this, some firms still prefer to enter the market using their original brand names. Besides, Jaw, Wang and Hsu (2011) point out that some fashion brands used a Chinese name when they were first introduced in Taiwan (e.g. *Prada* chose the phonetic adaptation 普拉达 *pǔlādá*), but they now use their original names in advertising and marketing activities, since these brands have become familiar to Taiwanese consumers. Furthermore, Schmitt and Pan (1994) highlight that alphabetic names seem to work for names that are short and catchy, such as 3M, IBM, M&M, etc. These names become visual symbols or logos and are remembered for their graphic qualities rather than as linguistic units. As a matter of fact, this kind of names are sometimes chosen by Chinese companies too, as seen above (4.3).

Translating a brand name into Chinese requires not only a good understanding of the product and of the target consumers, but also of their

23 This strategy may work well if the global brand name can be pronounced easily and it does not have negative connotations in different markets.

linguistic and cultural background (Yang 2008).

A good translation should possess the same characteristics highlighted above for Chinese brand names. First of all, the translated brand name should be short, preferably composed of two syllables/characters (see above). Also, characters containing too many strokes or uncommon characters should be avoided: «if uncommon characters are used, uneducated consumers will fail to recognize them or will mispronounce them, which will inevitably impair the effectiveness of the brand name in use» (Yang 2008, p. 402). Secondly, the translated name should be sonorous, since, as we already mentioned above, this may enhance memorization and help generate favourable brand perception. From the semantic point of view, as highlighted by Li and Shooshtari (2003), brand names as linguistic symbols bear certain culture-specific meanings and values, and «native Chinese consumers prefer and expect visual images provoked by linguistic symbols». Many foreign brand names are meaningless and are difficult to memorize for Chinese speakers; therefore, in the translations of foreign brand names into Chinese, characters with a positive meaning are preferred: characters with auspicious meanings, especially those related to good luck, fortune, longevity, wealth, happiness, etc., are often used, as they can evoke favourable associations and, thus, can favour the acceptance of the product by the public (Schmitt, Pan 1994; Yang 2008). Besides, characters homophonous or near-homophonous to words with an ominous, vulgar or negative meaning must be avoided.

At the same time, translated Western brand names should also be able to convey foreignness, in order to enhance positive associations with Western brands, their exoticism and their perceived quality. The research conducted by Tian and Dong (2011, pp. 56-58) highlights that designation of 'Western otherness', one of the positive characteristics associated to Western brands (see section 2), depends more on whether the brand name translation reveals deviations from norms of Chinese language and culture rather than on actual recognition of the country of origin of the product. They identify three types of deviations. First of all, there are brand names that do not sound Chinese, such as 摩托罗拉 *mótuōluólā* (*Motorola*). Secondly, there are brand names that may sound as Chinese but do not possess product-relevant meaning, as e.g. 卡夫 *kǎ-fū* 'card-husband' (*Kraft*). Third, names composed of an unusual combination of words, as e.g. 固特异 *gù-tè-yì* 'solid-outstanding-different' (*Goodyear*), formed by three fourth tone (falling) syllables: this sound combination is very unusual and thus considered foreign. However, not all brand names that show these deviations are considered as Western: some names show a lack of knowledge of Chinese language and culture, suggesting foreignness, but are also considered to be too strange; this makes them lose credibility as famous global brands. This supports Zhang and Schmitt (2001), who state that meaningful translated brand names are more effective.

Tian and Dong (2011) also point out that some translated brand names look so Chinese that they are not recognized as foreign. For example, they highlight that some participants to their research do not include 潘婷 *pāntíng* (*Pantene*) among foreign brands: «I knew Lux is an American brand, but I didn't know Pantene is one too. Pan-ting is a very traditional original Chinese girl's name, and the first celebrity who appeared in the Pantene commercial was the movie star Ms Pan Hong. So I thought the Pantene brand was her brand». (Tian, Dong 2011, p. 57). Brands like this, which look very Chinese, forgo any presumed positive associations with Western brands.

Yet, other brand names are able to convey foreignness and to capture, at the same time, nuances of the Chinese language and culture. For example, Tian and Dong (2011) make the examples of *Safeguard* (soap), which in Chinese has been translated as 舒服佳 *shūfújiā* 'comfortable-fine', a name which is able to convey the attributes of the product, consistent with Chinese brand naming practices (see section 4). As observed by one of the participants of the research conducted by Tian and Dong (2011), the name is able to explain the features and usage of the product and has some Chinese flavour in it, but it is formed by an atypical combination of characters. Thus, the name conveys foreignness but also shows affinities with Chinese language and culture (see section 2).

The picture sketched above shows that adapting a foreign brand name in Chinese is a very demanding task. In what follows, we will illustrate the main linguistic strategies adopted in the translation of foreign brand names into Chinese. We will mainly focus on the adaptation of Western brand names, but we will make reference to Japanese and Korean brand names too, which are present in the sample we analysed (5.8).

## 5.1 Literal Translation

One of the possible strategies adopted in the translation of foreign brand names into Chinese is word-for-word translation, as in the examples below:

- (16) *Red Bull*: 红牛 *hóng-niú* 'red-bull'  
*Microsoft*: 微软 *wéi-ruǎn* 'micro-soft'  
*Credit Suisse*: 瑞士信贷 *ruìshì-xìndài* 'Switzerland-credit'  
*Nestlé*: 雀巢 *què-cháo* 'sparrow-nest'

Note that when the morphological structure of the original word is different from that of the target language, the translated word is built according to the rules of the target language. Thus, for example, the translation of *Credit Suisse* shows the Chinese modifier-modified structure.

As for *Nestlé*, at first sight 雀巢 *què-cháo* 'sparrow-nest' would seem to be the translation of the *Nestlé* logo, i.e. a sparrow in its nest, rather than a translation of the name. However, *Nestlé* is the name of the founder of the company, Henri Nestlé, born as Heinrich Nestle.<sup>24</sup> *Nestle* in an Alemannic German dialect means 'small nest' (and, indeed, his family escutcheon was a bird feeding its babies in the nest, as in the first company logo). Thus the Chinese name, besides recalling the logo, is also a translation of the brand name.

As in the case of Chinese brand names (see section 4), when the translation is formed by a monosyllabic name, the word 牌 *pái* 'brand' is generally added (as e.g. 壳牌 *ké-pái* 'shell-brand' for *Shell*), forming what can be considered as hybrid forms (see 5.6).

In the case of meaningful names, a simple translation may look like the best option, since it can preserve the original meaning of the brand. However, it is very difficult to retain also the cultural meaning of the original, since social values, beliefs and attitudes vary greatly among societies; thus, something that evokes a certain image in one culture does not necessarily evoke the same image in another culture (and actually sometimes can evoke opposite images). Given these implications, this strategy is not widely adopted and is avoided when the translation can be associated with a negative image in the Chinese culture (see Zhao 2007). Sometimes, the translation of the foreign brand name is not plainly literal, as in the case of *Oracle*, translated as 甲骨文 *jiǎgǔwén* 'oracle-bone inscriptions'. As a matter of fact, 甲骨文 *jiǎgǔwén* more precisely refers to oracle-bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty (fourteenth to eleventh century B.C.), used for

24 Heinrich Nestle was a German pharmacist. When he moved to Vevey, a French-speaking area of Switzerland, he changed his name to the more French-sounding Henri Nestlé.



divination, which are the earliest source of Chinese writing. Thus, a word able to convey the meaning of the original name was recast in a word laden with cultural significance for the Chinese public.

A further example of an 'adjusted' non-literal translation is that of the Chinese version of *Mr. Muscle*, 威猛先生 *wēiměng xiānshēng* ('brave mister'); the word *muscle* is replaced by a word more appealing for the Chinese public (see Li, Shooshtari 2003), i.e. 威猛 *wēiměng* 'brave', which provides suggestions similar to the original. Besides, the word 先生 *xiānshēng* 'mister' follows the word 威猛 *wēiměng* 'brave', since, differently from English, in Chinese any title like 'mister' follows the proper name (see Arcodia, Piccinini 2006).

## 5.2 Phonetic Adaptation

One of the strategies adopted in translating foreign brand names into Chinese is phonetic adaptation. This strategy is not easy to adopt given the great differences among the phonological system of Modern Chinese and those of the major European languages: as said above, in Chinese the number of distinct syllables is comparatively low, syllable structure is simple and consonant clusters are not allowed.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, in the process of phonetic adaptation, the foreign name is divided into syllables and then the closest Chinese syllables are chosen. The result is a name which is phonologically close to the original one; in the written form, characters with a neutral meaning are usually chosen.<sup>26</sup> See the examples below:

- (17) *Ferrari*: 法拉利 *fǎ-lā-lì* 'law-pull-benefit'  
*Ferrè*: 沸雷 *fèi-léi* 'boil-thunder'  
*Kraft*: 卡夫 *kǎ-fū* 'card-husband'

The examples in (17) apparently make use of characters without any relevant meaning.<sup>27</sup> In applying this strategy, syllables have to be carefully chosen in order to avoid associations with homophones bearing a negative or irreverent meaning (see Francis, Lam, Walls 2002; Chan, Huang 1997).

<sup>25</sup> In contrast, English, for example, has syllables with very complex structures, such as CCCVCC, with an initial three-consonant cluster, as e.g. *splint* (see Chan, Huang 1997).

<sup>26</sup> For a list of characters commonly used in the phonetic adaptation of foreign words, see Xing (2006, p. 122).

<sup>27</sup> Though, in the case of *Ferrari*, the last syllable 利 *lì* 'interest, benefit' is also found in 意大利 *Yìdàlì* 'Italy'.

Being meaningless, these names are not particularly easy to memorize and do not convey positive suggestions. However, it can be observed that names formed through pure phonetic adaptation immediately identify the products as foreign, thus they may result attractive in a way (especially for some kinds of products), at least for particular groups of consumers. For example, some participants to the research conducted by Tian and Dong (2011) suggest that a stronger Western-oriented brand name translation seem appropriate for hi-tech products, in order to highlight their Western origin, since the West is considered as a place where technologically superior goods are produced. Chinese companies too, as we have seen (4.4), can choose to adopt a foreign-sounding name without any relevant meaning either because they are internationally-oriented or because they target a particular group of consumers.

Generally speaking, semantic loans in Chinese have often been preferred to phonetic loans. Starting from the second half of the nineteenth century, some neologisms entered the Chinese lexicon as 'transliterations' of foreign words, or at least ran parallel to the European-Japanese<sup>28</sup> loan translation of the same word; eventually the transliterations mostly became obsolete (see Masini 1993; Liu 1995).<sup>29</sup> However, as pointed out by Kim (2012), phonetic loans are actually increasing in number. According to Kim, this is due, first of all, to the exposure to new technology, brand names and company names, which have flooded into Chinese since the 1970s; semantic loans are not an effective method to borrow proper nouns, for which a phonetic adaptation is usually preferred. Secondly, English education is becoming increasingly popular in China, thus many Chinese people are familiar with English and can accept phonetic loans more easily.

### 5.3 Phonetic-semantic Adaptation

Phonetic-semantic adaptation too is based on the phonetic adaptation of the foreign name (either the whole name or part of it); however, here the characters chosen are either auspicious characters or characters suggesting the characteristics, qualities or function of the product (see Wang, Zhang 2005; Arcodia, Piccinini 2006; Alon, Littrell, Chan 2009). This is the case, for instance, of the brand name *Coca-Cola* discussed in section 3.

28 On Japanese graphic loans, see section 5.4.

29 One example is the Chinese word for *democracy*. For some time the phonetic adaptation 德莫拉克西 *démòlākèxī* coexisted with the loan translation (from Japanese) 民主 *mínzhǔ*. Eventually only the loan translation survived and it is still in use today. The word 民主 *mínzhǔ* is actually a return loan, since Japanese borrowed it from Chinese, where it had the meaning of 'people rule', and then was reintroduced into Chinese with the new meaning it has acquired in Japanese, i.e. 'democracy' (Masini 1993, Liu 1995).

Other examples are provided below:

- (18) *Tefal*: 特福 *tè-fú* 'special-good.fortune'  
*Avon*: 雅芳 *yǎ-fāng* 'elegant-fragrant'  
*Vileda*: 微力达 *wēi-lì-dá* 'minute/profound-power-arrive/reach'

There are also cases like that of 香奈儿 *xiāng-nài-r* 'fragrant/perfume-what-SUFF' (*Chanel*), in which the first part is a phonetic-semantic adaptation (the first character makes reference to the product), while the second part is a pure phonetic adaptation.

Sometimes phonetic adaptation takes into account only some of the syllables or of the phonemes composing the foreign name, as e.g.

- (19) *Logitech*: 罗技 *luó-jì* 'net-skill'  
*BMW*: 宝马 *bǎo-mǎ* 'treasure-horse'  
*Pampers*: 帮宝适 *bāng-bǎo-shì* 'help-baby-suitable'

In the case of *Logitech*, the Chinese name is a phonetic adaptation of the first two syllables, *lo* and *gi*. For the brand name *BMW* (*Bayerische Motoren Werke*), only the first two letters of the German initialism have been taken into account; the Chinese name suggests that this car is like a precious horse (see 4.6). As pointed out by Tian and Dong (2011), 宝马 *bǎo-mǎ* 'precious-horse' is a metaphor for vehicles, since precious horses run reliably fast for a long time, and thus the translation chosen by *BMW* shows nuances of Chinese culture. However, they further point out that using 'precious horse' for an automobile brand name is new in China, and thus this name is obviously foreign; Chinese brands in the same category often have some elements revealing their domestic origin or political alignment, as e.g. 红旗 *hóng qí* 'red flag' and 东风 *dōng fēng* 'Eastern wind' (Tian, Dong 2011, p. 58).

As for *Pampers*, the Chinese phonetic adaptation aims at rendering the first syllable and the initial and final sounds of the second syllable. The characters chosen suggest that these diapers are suitable (适 *shì*) for helping (帮 *bāng*) babies (宝 *bǎo*) (see Arcodia, Piccinini 2006). The character 宝 *bǎo* suggests the idea of something precious and makes also references to babies (宝宝 *bǎobǎo* 'darling baby').

Phonetic-semantic adaptation may be considered as the ideal brand name translation strategy, since it is able to recall the sound of the original name, providing, at the same time, positive suggestions. However, creating such names is not an easy task. Fetscherin et al. (2012), basing on their research on 100 multinational brands, show that less than a quarter of the companies they studied achieved this «branding nirvana».

## 5.4 Graphic Loans

Japanese companies can choose to adopt graphic loans<sup>30</sup> (see Masini 1993, Liu 1995). Take, for example, the following translations of Japanese brand names into Chinese:

- (20) *Toyota*: トヨタ (a toponym): 丰田 *fēng-tián*  
*Honda*: 本田 (a surname): 本田 *běn-tián*  
*Nintendō*: 任天堂: 任天堂 *rèn-tiāntáng* 'leave.everything.to-heaven'

The brand name *Toyota*, from the name of the city where the company is headquartered, is usually written in *katakana*<sup>31</sup> (トヨタ); the Chinese character version is 豊田 (simplified characters: 丰田). Thus, the Chinese version keeps the original name (in characters), however following Chinese pronunciation; the same goes for *Honda* and *Nintendo*.

Graphic loans are often chosen for Japanese brand names, which is very convenient due to the shared script, while in Western countries the romanized Japanese name is usually adopted.

Something similar happens with Korean names as well;<sup>32</sup> see the examples below:

- (21) *Samsung*: 삼성: 三星 *sān-xīng* 'three-star'  
*Hyundai*: 현대: 现代 *xiàndài* 'modern'

**30** Graphic loans are Japanese words written in *kanji* (Chinese characters), which have been borrowed into Chinese and are read as if they were ordinary Chinese words (e.g. 社会 *shèhuì* for Japanese *shakai*). This strategy was widely adopted to introduce Japanese terms into Chinese during the second half of the nineteenth century; many of these Japanese words were translation of European words, mainly English (see Masini 1993, Liu 1995). Thus, graphic loans played a key role in transferring Western knowledge into China.

**31** *Katakana* and *hiragana* are the syllabaries which, together with Chinese characters (*kanji*), are used to write Japanese. *Hiragana* is used for grammatical words and some content words, while *katakana* is mostly used for the transcription of loanwords. Sometimes the Latin alphabet (*rōmaji*) is also used. According to Schmitt and Pan (1994), *katakana* is most appropriate for foreign products and products associated with foreign lifestyle. For example, they state that *kanji* may be appropriate for tea products but not for high-tech products, for which *katakana* is preferred. As to *hiragana*, it is frequently used for beauty products, hair salons and kimono stores.

**32** Korean too borrowed Chinese characters (한자 *hanja*), which were incorporated to the language assigning to them Korean pronunciation. In 1440 한글 *hangul*, the Korean alphabet, was created, but Chinese characters were still used up to the end of the nineteenth century. Nowadays Chinese characters are not used anymore, neither to write native Korean words nor to write words of Chinese origin, however a good working knowledge of Chinese characters is still important for reading older texts and scholarly texts in the humanities.

The *hanja* (Chinese character) version of these two brand names are respectively 三星 and 現代 (simplified characters: 现代). Thus, as in the case of the Japanese names discussed above, Chinese retains the original names, read as if they were Chinese.

### 5.5 Creation of Original Names

Sometimes the strategy chosen is not adaptation but *ad hoc* creations describing the characteristics/qualities/benefits of the product, its function or, in any case, containing characters with a positive connotation (see Wang, Zhang 2005; Arcodia, Piccinini 2006, Basciano 2015). Original names are generally created following the same principles used in the creation of Chinese brand names, with a preference for disyllabic names (see section 4). See the examples below:

- (22) *Bref*: 妙力 *miào-lì* 'wonderful-power'  
*Ariel*: 碧浪 *bì-làng* 'jade.green-wave'  
*Sprite*: 雪碧 *xuě-bì* 'snow-jade.green'  
*Energizer*: 劲量 *jìn-liàng* 'strength-quantity/capacity'

All the names aim at suggesting positive connotations about the product. For example, *Bref* 妙力 *miào-lì* (cleaning products) suggests that these products are very effective; *Energizer* 劲量 *jìn-liàng* (batteries) emphasizes that the batteries are long-lasting. In the case of *Ariel* 碧浪 *bì-làng* and *Sprite* 雪碧 *xuě-bì*, the character 碧 *bì* 'jade.green' recalls the colour of the packaging. Note also the character 雪 *xuě* 'snow' in the Chinese version of *Sprite* (a soft drink), which is very common in Chinese brand names for drinks (see 4.6). In some cases existing Chinese words are borrowed, as e.g.:

- (23) *Citi*: 花旗 *huāqí* 'United States, Star-Spangled Banner'  
*Kit Kat*: 奇巧 *qíqiǎo* 'intriguing/ingenious/exquisite'

*Citi* is an American multinational financial services corporation headquartered in New York City. The Chinese version of the name makes reference to the country where the corporation is based.

As for *Kit Kat* (a chocolate-covered wafer biscuit), the Chinese name 奇巧 *qíqiǎo* not only conveys positive suggestions, but also preserves the alliteration of the initials of the two syllables of the original name. Furthermore, note that 巧 *qiǎo* is the first syllable of the word 巧克力 *qiǎokèlì* 'chocolate' (Basciano 2015).

## 5.6 Hybrid Forms

Sometimes different strategies are combined, creating hybrid forms, as in the examples below:

- (24) *Starbucks*: 星巴克 *xīng-bā-kè* 'star-hope.for-overcome/gram'  
*Oil of Olay*: 玉兰油 *yùlán-yóu* 'magnolia-oil'  
*Best Buy*: 百思买 *bǎi-sī-mǎi* 'hundred-think-buy'  
*Moët & Chandon*: 酩悦香槟 *mǐng-yuè-xiāngbīn* 'dead.drunk-happy-champagne'

The Chinese version of the brand name *Starbucks* is formed by 星 *xīng* 'star', which translates the first part of the name, and 巴克 *bākè*, i.e. the phonetic adaptation of *bucks*.

The Chinese translation of *Oil of Olay* (*Ulan/Ulay/Olaz*)<sup>33</sup> is able to convey some Chinese flavour: the first two syllables of the name, 玉兰 *yùlán* 'magnolia', are a phonetic adaptation of *Ulan* and, at the same time, convey a very positive meaning: magnolia is both a very popular flower in China and a symbol of nobility and elegance (Lü 2005); the last part of the name, 油 *yóu*, is the translation of *oil*. The Chinese translation retains the Chinese modifier-modified order, thus 油 *yóu* 'oil' is placed after 玉兰 *yùlán* 'magnolia'.

Sometimes this strategy can lead to a humorous effect. In the case of *Best Buy*, 百思 *bǎi-sī* 'hundred-think' is the phonetic adaptation of *best*, while 买 *mǎi* translates *buy*. However, the whole translated name seems to suggest something like 'think one hundred times before buying' (cf. 三思而行 *sān-sī-ér-xíng* 'three-think-then-go, look before you leap').

As for *Moët & Chandon*, the Chinese name is formed by a phonetic-semantic translation of *Moët* (the characters 酩悦 *mǐng-yuè* approximately reproduce the sound of the original name, and have a meaning related to the kind of product) with the addition of a semantic component, 香槟 *xiāngbīn* 'champagne' (a phonetic loan), which specifies the kind of product.<sup>34</sup>

Another type of hybrid consists in the combination of Latin letters and phonetic adaptations or semantic elements (literal or non-literal translations), which Kim (2012) calls 'hybrids of foreign letters'. See the examples below (from Kim 2012, p. 47):

33 *Olay* originated in South Africa. *Oil of Olay* was originally a thick pink liquid marketed as an anti-ageing beauty fluid. The brand was known as *Oil of Ulay* in the UK, as *Oil of Olaz* in other European countries, and as *Oil of Ulan* in Australia. In 1999, the name was unified under the global name *Olay*, except for German-speaking countries and Italy (<http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/fashion-blog/2012/mar/12/brief-history-of-olay> [2016-03-31]).

34 Cf. hybrid words, as e.g. 啤酒 *píjiǔ* 'beer (phonetic adaptation)-alcoholic.beverage, beer', 摩托车 *mótuō-chē* 'motor (phonetic adaptation)-vehicle, motorcycle'.

(25) *UTStarcom*: UT 斯达康 *sīdákāng*

*W.W. Grainger*: W.W. 格雷杰 *géléijié*

*W.B. Sanders Company*: W.B. 桑德斯出版公司 *sāngdésī chūbǎn gōngsī*

In the first two examples Latin letters are combined with a phonetic adaptation of the name. The last example combines Latin letters with the phonetic adaptation of *Sanders* plus a semantic part, 出版公司 *chūbǎn gōngsī* 'publishing company'. As we have seen in section 4.3, some Chinese brand names too are formed by using both Latin letters and Chinese characters (as e.g. *ZTE* 中兴 *Zhōngxīng*).

## 5.7 Common Semantic Areas

As in the case of Chinese brand names seen above, in the translations of foreign brand names, excluding pure phonetic adaptations, we can find some recurring constituents. Basing on their sample of 131 translations of foreign brand names into Chinese, Arcodia, Piccinini (2006) single out some recurring semantic areas (see also 4.6 above):

- a. Symbolic characters related to Chinese tradition and other terms related to wealth, happiness, etc., such as: 吉 / 吉利 *jílì* 'auspicious, propitious, good luck', as e.g. *Cadbury* 吉百利 *jí-bǎi-lì*, where between the two characters composing the word 吉利 *jílì* the character 百 *bǎi* 'hundred' is inserted, suggesting abundance; 福 *fú* 'good fortune', as e.g. *Tefal* 特福 *tè-fú* 'special-good.fortune'; 乐 *lè* 'happy', as e.g. *Carrefour* 家乐福 *jiā-lè-fú* 'home-happy-good.fortune'.
- b. Names of traditional plants and animals which bear a positive connotation (see 4.6), such as: 龙 *lóng* 'dragon' (e.g. *Athlon* 速龙 *sù-lóng* 'fast/speed-dragon'), 马 *mǎ* 'horse' (e.g. *BMW* 宝马 *bǎo-mǎ* 'treasure-horse', ex. 19), 兰 *lán* (e.g. *Lancome* 兰蔻 *lán-kòu* 'orchid-cardamon').
- c. Characters related to prestige and excellence, such as: 特 *tè* 'special', which emphasizes the excellence of the product (e.g. *Tupperware* 特百惠 *tè-bǎi-huì* 'special-hundred-benefit'; see *Tefal* 特福 *tè-fú* above); 宝 *bǎo* (e.g. *Hasbro* 孩之宝 *hǎi-zhī-bǎo* 'child-DET-treasure', i.e. 'child's treasure'; see *BMW* 宝马 *bǎo-mǎ* and *Pampers* 帮宝适 *bāng-bǎo-shì*, ex. 19); 百 *bǎi* 'hundred', meaning abundance (e.g. *Budweiser* 百威 *bǎi-wēi* 'hundred-power').

There are also recurring characters for specific kinds of products. For example, in the names of cosmetics, one often finds characters describing oils, creams or liquids, such as 露 *lù* 'dew, syrup', used in particular for products such as shampoos or body lotions (e.g. *Revlon* 露华浓 *lù-huá-nóng* 'dew-magnificent-dense', *Colgate* 高露洁 *gāo-lù-jié* 'high-dew-clean'). Other common characters used for cosmetics are those referring to elegance

and beauty, such as 雅 *yǎ* 'refined, elegant' (e.g. *Nivea*: 妮维雅 *nī-wéi-yǎ* 'girl-join/maintain-elegant'; see also *Avon* 雅芳 *yǎ-fāng*, ex. 18) and 美 *měi* 'beautiful' (e.g. *Maybelline* 美宝莲 *měi-bǎo-lián* 'beautiful-precious-lotus').

For house cleaning products recurring characters are those related to cleanliness and strength, such as 力 *lì* 'power, strength', 洁 *jié* 'clean': e.g. *Cillit Bang* 奇力洁 *qí-lì-jié* 'marvellous-power-clean'; *Vileda* 微力达 *wēi-lì-dá* (ex. 18).

In the names of electronic products one often finds characters related to energy, strength and speed, as e.g. *Athlon* 速龙 *sù-lóng* (see b. above), *Energizer* 劲量 *jìn-liàng* (ex. 22).

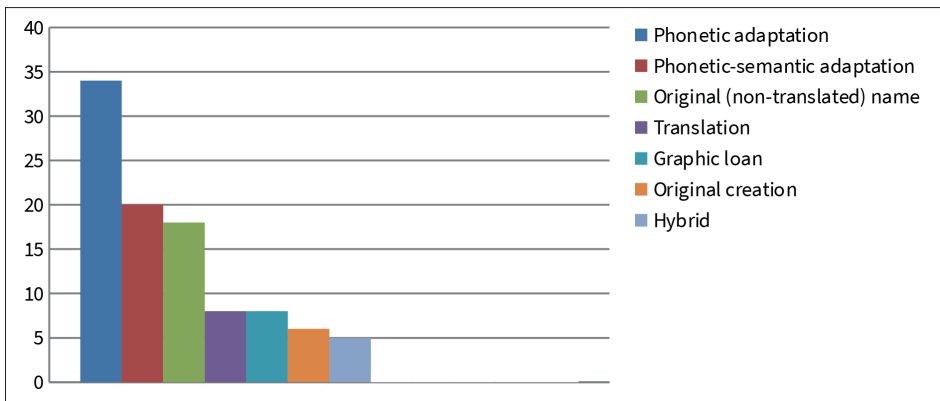
Finally, in the names of foodstuff characters related to flavour, taste and pleasure are commonly used, as e.g. 味 *wèi* 'flavour, taste' (e.g. *Barilla*: 百味来 *bǎi-wèi-lái* 'hundred-flavour-come') and 乐 *lè* 'happy, pleasure' (e.g. *Ritz* 乐之 *lè-zhī* 'happy-this').

## 5.8 The Chinese Translation of the Best Global Brands 2014

In order to assess brand name translation tendencies in Chinese, we analysed the Chinese version of the top 100 global brands listed in the *Interbrand best global brands 2014* classification (see the appendix).

The results are shown in graphic 1:

Graphic 1. Translation tendencies of the top 100 global brands listed in the *Interbrand best global brands 2014* classification in Chinese



Among the top 100 global brands, one is Chinese (and thus is not included in the graphic), i.e. *Huawei* 华为 *Huá-wéi* 'China-be'.

Out of the remaining 99 brand names, 34 are phonetic adaptations of the original brands. We included here also cases of partial adaptations,



such as 肯德基 *kěndējī*, which is the phonetic adaptation of the first part of the name, i.e. *Kentucky (Kentucky Fried Chicken, KFC)*. This confirms what Kim (2012) pointed out, i.e. that despite the fact that semantic loans are preferred, phonetic adaptations are growing in number (see 5.2). As a matter of fact, there are only 8 translations in this list, including not plainly literal translations, like *Oracle* 甲骨文 *jiǎgǔwén* (see 5.1). This reflects the difficulties of retaining the cultural meaning of the original name, given the differences between China and the West as to social values, beliefs and attitudes (see 5.1).

Only for 20 names (less than a quarter) a phonetic-semantic strategy was used. We included here only those brand names which display characters referring to the characteristics, properties or benefits of the product, or which display a combination of characters bearing positive or auspicious meaning, including cases where the phonetic adaptation is partial, such as 宝马 *bǎo-mǎ* (see 5.3, ex. 19). We excluded brand name translations such as 吉列 *jí-liè* 'lucky-arrange'; though 吉 *jí* is an auspicious character, the combination chosen does not seem particularly meaningful. Besides, 吉 *jí* is one of the characters commonly chosen for the phonetic adaptation of foreign words into Chinese. Thus, even though phonetic-semantic rendering seems to be the ideal translation strategy, it is not adopted as much as phonetic adaptation in our sample. This result, which is akin to that reached by Fetscherin et al. (2012) in a similar research, confirms that this translation strategy, though preferable, is not easy to achieve (see 5.3).

Almost all the Japanese and Korean brand names (with the exception of *Sony* and *Canon*), 8 in total, are translated by means of graphic loans; as for *Panasonic*, the graphic loan comes from the former name of the company, 松下 *Matsushita*. This supports the hypothesis that, due to the shared script, graphic loan is the most convenient strategy. It is worth noting that both *Sony* and *Canon*, the only two Japanese names for which a phonetic and a phonetic-semantic adaptation, respectively, have been chosen, are written in *katakana* and not in *kanji*.<sup>35</sup>

Hybrid forms are only 5 out of 99. We already discussed *Shell* 壳牌 *ké-pái* 'shell-brand' in section 5.1, where we have a translation of the original name followed by 'brand', to make the name disyllabic, and *Starbucks* 星巴克 *xīng-bā-kè* 'star-hope.for-overcome/gram' in section 5.6. As for the other two hybrids, *Santander* 桑坦德银行 *sāngtǎndé yínháng* and *Corona Extra* 科罗娜特级 *kēluónà tèjī*, they are formed by a phonetic adaptation and a translation; in the case of *Santander*, 银行 *yínháng* is the translation of *banco* from *Banco Santander*, which does not appear in the original brand

35 The name *Sony* originates from a blend of two words, *sonus* 'sound', and *sonny* 'boy' (<http://www.sony.co.jp/SonyInfo/CorporateInfo/History/> [2016-03-31]). The name *Canon*, instead, comes from the name of the *Guanyin Bodhisattva*, a Buddhist deity, in Japanese 観音 *kannon* (Sisk Noguchi, 2009).

name. Finally, *Mastercard* 万事达卡 *wànshì-dá-kǎ* 'everything-reach/arrive-card' combines an original creation with the translation of the word *card*, suggesting that with this card you can get whatever you want or that it brings myriads of possibilities.

We also find 6 original creations: we have already discussed *Sprite* 雪碧 *xuě-bì* 'snow-jade.green' and *Citi* 花旗 *huāqí* 'United States, Star-Spangled Banner' in section 5.5. As to *Land Rover* 路虎 *lù-hǔ* 'road-tiger, tiger of the road', it suggests that the car is fast, agile and powerful. The brand *Pizza Hut* 必胜客 *bì-shèng-kè* 'certainly-win-guest', besides suggesting a positive meaning, 'the costumer certainly wins', also has some phonetic similarities with the original name (*pizza* and *bìshèng* have some similar sounds). As for *Kleenex* 舒洁 *shū-jié* 'relax/comfortable-clean' it gives positive suggestions related to the products (facial tissues, hand towels, dinner napkins and wet wipes). Finally, in 金霸王 *jīn-bàwáng* 'gold-overlord', 金 *jīn* 'gold' recalls the packaging of *Duracell* batteries, while 霸王 *bàwáng* 'overlord' suggests the power of these batteries.

Finally, 18 out of 99 brand names retain their original name. Many of these names are short and catchy, such as IBM, GE, H&M, SAP, UPS, MTV, DHL, 3M, GAP<sup>36</sup> (see Schmitt, Pan 1994 and section 5 above). They are mostly acronyms/initialisms, but we find also a blend, *FedEx* (from *Federal Express*) and short names such as *Visa*, *Zara*, *Ebay* and *Adobe*. As we have seen, this kind of names are found among Chinese brand names too (4.3); thus, they appear to be effective global brand names. *Visa*, for example, decided to adopt a one brand name strategy, using the same name worldwide; in this way it has been able to keep a consistent image and to take advantage of the positive associations with reliability, security, and convenience attached to the brand (see Dull 2002). At the same time, the name was carefully chosen in order to be short, easy to pronounce and to recall; the meaning of the word *visa* too, i.e. an authorization that gives you permission to enter, pass through or leave a foreign country is suited for a credit card (see Hackett, Kamery 2004).

As for *Ebay*, we decided to choose the name used on the website; however, along with the name *Ebay*, the company also registered in China<sup>37</sup> the trademarks 易贝 *yì-bèi* 'easy-shell' (phonetic adaptation) and *Ebay* 易趣 *yì-qù* 'easy-interesting', which is also a partial phonetic adaptation. A special case is that of HSBC (abbreviation of *Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*), which in Chinese is 汇丰 *huìfēng*. It is a British multinational banking and financial services company, headquartered in London, whose origins lie in Hong Kong and Shanghai, where branches were first opened

36 GAP has a phonetic adaptation registered in different classes of products, 盖璞 *gàipú* (see China Patent Trademark Office).

37 Data from the China Patent Trademark Office.

in 1865 with the aim to finance trade between Asia and the West. Thus, 汇丰 *Huìfēng*, which comes from 香港上海汇丰银行有限公司 *Xiānggǎng Shànghǎi huìfēng yínháng yǒuxiàn gōngsī* (Hong Kong and Shanghai Huifeng banking corporation limited) is part of the original Chinese name of the bank.

*Facebook*, the access to which is reportedly blocked in mainland China, is also translated as 脸谱 *liǎn-pǔ* 'face-table', 脸书 *liǎn-shū* 'face-book' and 面(子)书 *miàn(zi)-shū* 'face-book' in the Chinese-speaking world. Actually, according to the data in the China Patent Trademark Office, the company tried to register these trademarks too. As for *Ralph Lauren* and *Hugo Boss*,<sup>38</sup> it seems to be quite common among fashion brands, or other well-known brands, to use their original name. Even when they have chosen a phonetic adaptation, some brands decide to retain their original names in their websites and advertising, as in the case of *Burberry*, *Prada* and *BMW*, possibly because they have already become popular as such among Chinese consumers. As for *Prada*, judging from the data available on the database of the China Patent Trademark Office and Searchtmr, the company has not renewed the registration of the trademark 普拉达 *pǔlādá* (phonetic adaptation). The tendency to use the original name in visual communication seems to be an effort towards standardization of an international brand name.

Thus, it seems that, perhaps unsurprisingly, well-known global brands show a stronger tendency to retain their original name or to adopt a phonetic adaptation, possibly playing on their fame and good reputation. The single brand strategy enables companies to keep their values and image globally.

## 5.9 Regional Variation in Brand Names

A further difficulty which companies have to face in the process of adapting their brand names to the Chinese market has to do with the great linguistic and cultural differences that exist also within the Chinese-speaking world, making it very difficult to create a universal Chinese name.

In section 5, we listed five options for introducing a brand name to the East- and Southeast Asian market. Apart from those, two more possibilities come into play when entering Chinese-speaking markets, namely (Jaw, Wang, Hsu 2011, p. 648):

1. Use in Mainland China a Chinese brand name first adopted in Taiwan or Hong Kong, as e.g. 摩托罗拉 *mótuōluólā* (*Motorola*) or 麦当劳 *mài-dāng-láo* (*McDonald's*).
2. Use different Chinese brand names for different linguistic regions (see the examples below).

<sup>38</sup> Actually, *Hugo Boss* has some phonetic adaptations registered for different classes of products, as e.g. 雨果博斯 *yǔguǒ Bósī*, 雨果舶式 *yǔguǒ Bóshì* (see China Patent Trademark Office; Searchtmr).

From a linguistic point of view, in China there are at least seven language groups (Mandarin, Yue/Cantonese, Wu, Hakka, Min, Gan, Xiang), each of which comprises a number of dialects. Even though they all share a common written language (with the partial exception of Cantonese), there are significant differences among different dialects, and very often even dialects belonging to the same group are not mutually intelligible. Although the Chinese government strongly promotes the use of 普通话 *Pǔtōnghuà* 'common language', commonly known as Mandarin Chinese, local linguistic preferences and customs still prevail (Alon, Littrell, Chan 2009). Since Chinese characters can be pronounced differently in different dialects,<sup>39</sup> companies should find a name which sounds pleasant and easy to pronounce in all major language markets for the brand, avoiding characters whose pronunciation in a given dialect has homonyms with a negative meaning (Alon, Littrell, Chan 2009).

As highlighted by Schmitt and Pan (1994), it is possible, for example, that name awareness and positive associations may be established with a Cantonese name in Southern China but, as the company expands to Northern China, one finds out that the name has negative associations in Mandarin. This adds to the complexity of the whole process of branding adaptation. For example, when the brand *Johnson&Johnson* entered the Hong Kong market, it was rendered as 莊生 *zhuāngsheng* 'an official or lord during feudal times'. This association with upper-class membership was seen as inappropriate in the PRC, thus the name was later changed into 強生 *qiángshēng* 'strong-life' (see Schmitt, Pan 1994). This name combines a positive meaning (strong life) with a pronunciation which partly recalls the sound of the original word. In Taiwan yet another name was chosen, i.e. 嬌生 *jiāoshēng* 'delicate/lovely-life', meaning also 'spoiled child'. This could reflect a difference in parents' expectations towards children: because of the one-child policy, parents in the PRC hope to have a strong child, not a lovable, tender and delicate child', and neither a spoiled one (Fan 2005). Another example of brand differentiation due to cultural factors is that of the brand *Lux*, which in mainland China has been rendered as 力士 *lì-shì* 'strong man', while in Taiwan as 麗仕 *lì-shì* 'beautiful official'. The two names are homophonous, but the meanings conveyed by the characters forming the names are completely different. The mainland China name 'strong man' is in contrast with the image of a young lady portrayed on the packaging; however, as Fan (2005) highlights, the Taiwanese name, based on the attribute of beauty, was not acceptable during the era of forceful Communist doctrines, as it could be seen as a form of capitalistic

39 Take for example the character 火: in Mandarin it is pronounced as *huǒ*, in Southern Min (Xiamen) as *he*<sup>53</sup>, in Eastern Min (Fuzhou) as *huoi*<sup>33</sup>, in Gan (Nanchang) as *fo*<sup>213</sup>, in Xiang (Changsha) as *xo*<sup>41</sup>, in Hakka (Meixian) as *fo*<sup>31</sup>, in Yue (Cantonese, Canton) as *fo*<sup>35</sup>, in Wu (Shanghai) as *φu*<sup>55</sup>.

degeneration (Jaw, Wang, Hsu 2011). In other cases, differences arise from different consumer attitudes. For example, L'Oréal Paris had a common name in all the Chinese-speaking markets, i.e. 欧莱雅 *ōu-lái-yǎ* 'Europe-radish-elegant', but later in Taiwan the name was replaced by 巴黎莱雅 *bālí lái-yǎ* 'Paris radish-elegant', forming a hybrid (translation + phonetic adaptation), because surveys conducted by the company showed that consumers perceived a low correlation between the Chinese name and L'Oréal Paris. In order to enhance brand recognition and highlight the uniqueness of the Parisian brand, thus, the name was changed (Jaw, Wang, Hsu 2011).

Sometimes the differences in brand naming among different regions seem to be due to phonological reasons: for example, in the Hong Kong market, where Cantonese is still the main language despite the efforts to promote Mandarin, a different name from that used in the PRC may be chosen, just to make it sound closer to the original name in Cantonese.

Examples of different Chinese translations in the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan are shown below:<sup>40</sup>

Table 1. Examples of different Chinese translations in the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan

Brand name	PRC	Hong Kong	Taiwan
<b>Mercedes Benz</b>	奔驰 <i>bēnchí</i> 'run quickly'	平治 <i>píngzhì</i> 'put in order' (Cantonese: <i>peng4zi6</i> )	賓士 <i>bīnshì</i> 'guests' (TSM: <i>pínsū</i> )
<b>Voltaren</b>	扶他林 <i>fú-tā-lín</i> 'support-him-forest'	服他靈 <i>fú-tā-líng</i> 'take(medicine)-he-spirit/clever/effective' (Cantonese: <i>fuk6-taa1-leng4</i> )	服他寧 <i>fú-tā-níng</i> 'take(medicine)-he-peaceful/tranquil' (TSM: <i>hòk-thann-líng</i> )
<b>Heineken</b>	喜力 <i>xǐ-lì</i> 'happy-power'	喜力 <i>xǐ-lì</i> 'happy-power' (Cantonese: <i>hei2lik6</i> )	海尼根 <i>hǎi-ní-gēn</i> 'sea-nun-root' (TSM: <i>hái-ní-kin/kun</i> )

As for *Mercedes Benz*, the name adopted in the PRC is a phonetic-semantic adaptation: it recalls the pronunciation of the original name (*Benz*), and at the same time it suggests that these cars are very fast. The Hong Kong version of the name apparently is not as felicitous as that of the PRC: the pronunciation, indeed, is not as close to that of the original name; furthermore, from the semantic point of view, it makes use of characters without any relevant meaning. However, the Cantonese pronunciation of the characters 平治, i.e. *peng4zi6*, is an even better rendering of *Benz* than

40 We provide the Cantonese transcription for the Hong Kong version of the name and the Taiwanese Southern Min (abbreviated in TSM; the most widely spoken dialect in Taiwan) transcription for the Taiwanese version of the name. We use *Jyutping* for Cantonese, while for Taiwan Southern Min we use the *Taiwanese Romanization System* (*Tâi-lô Phing-im*).

奔驰 *bēnchí*. Thus, this name can be regarded as a phonetic adaptation based on Cantonese, rather than Mandarin. The Taiwanese version of the name is a phonetic adaptation without relevant meaning as well.

As to *Voltaren* (an anti-inflammatory drug), the Chinese name used in the PRC is a pure phonetic adaptation. In Hong Kong a different name was chosen: the phonetic adaptation 服他靈 *fú-tā-líng* works well both in Mandarin (*fú-tā-líng*) and in Cantonese (*fuk6-taa1-leng4*). Moreover, the meaning of the characters chosen are related to the product: the character 服 *fú* means 'to take a medicine' and the character 靈 *líng* suggests that the drug is effective. In Taiwan yet another name was chosen, 服他寧 *fú-tā-níng* 'take(medicine)-he-peaceful', in which only the last character differs from the Hong Kong version of the name: it can be considered as a phonetic-semantic adaptation, since the character 服 *fú*, as we have just said, means 'to take a medicine' and the last character conveys a positive meaning.

Finally, *Heineken* has the same name both in the PRC and in Hong Kong. The name appears to be a phonetic-semantic adaptation based on Cantonese, as 喜力 *hei2lik6* is much closer to *Heineken* than *xǐ-lì*; moreover, the characters chosen have a very positive meaning. In contrast, in Taiwan a pure phonetic adaptation was chosen, which works fine both in Mandarin and in Taiwan Southern Min.

## 6 Discussion

In this paper we have tried to provide a detailed and comprehensive overview of linguistic aspects relevant for Chinese brand naming practices, supported by statistics on the translation strategies adopted by foreign firms to adapt their brand names to Chinese.

This paper, thus, also provides suggestions for those firms who want to enter the Chinese market and wish to understand the nuances of Chinese language that are relevant to brand naming practices, which are essential in order to cross language barriers and to choose an appropriate brand naming strategy.

As already shown in previous research, this study has highlighted that linguistic and cultural differences make it difficult for firms to adopt a one-brand name strategy, standardizing brand names globally; firms display a strong tendency to localize their brand names when expanding to the Chinese market. The preferred strategy seems to be phonetic adaptation without relevant meaning; this strategy makes the foreign name pronounceable and, at the same time, has the advantage to recall (even though approximately) the original brand name, in the attempt to make the brand name, sounding the same all around the world. The phonetic shape of the name, together with the choice of 'neutral' characters forming a meaningless combination, characterizes the name as foreign and,

thus, this strategy has the advantage to play on the positive associations connected to Western brands. However, the lack of product-related meaning or of characters with an auspicious meaning can make the name less attractive to some Chinese consumers.

We suggest that literal translation, aimed at preserving the meaning of the brand name rather than at maintaining the sound, is used only when it is possible to retain the cultural meaning of the original name or, in any case, when the meaning of the original name is compatible with Chinese social values, beliefs and attitudes. Since this is very difficult to achieve, companies tend to avoid this strategy: among the best global brands 2014, only 8 chose this strategy. Sometimes a compromise is made by partially adapting the translation, resulting in translations that are not plainly literal.

The most effective strategy seems to be one which takes into account both meaning and pronunciation (phonetic-semantic adaptation), since it is able to recall the sound of the original brand name and, at the same time, to provide a positive connotation. This kind of adaptation is closer to Chinese brand names, which are generally more meaningful than, e.g., English ones and often contain reference to the benefits of the product or have positive connotations; however it seems not to be easy to achieve and it is not as widely used as expected (only 20 out of 99 in our sample).

Even though a one-brand strategy is not recommended, this can work for well-known brand names, as e.g. luxury goods: retaining the original name has the advantage to play on their good reputation and fame, to stress the positive values associated to them and to convey a consistent image. Even though they are not easy to pronounce, the target consumers recognize the superior quality associated to the brand. In any case, we suggest that it is important to consider the target consumer and the possible impact that the non-translated name has on him. Furthermore, the one-brand strategy works better for short and catchy names and it is not recommended for long names or names which may be difficult to pronounce for Chinese native speakers.

As for Japanese and Korean firms, the graphic loan strategy seems to be the most convenient to adopt: it has the advantage of maintaining the original name, while associating to it the Chinese pronunciation. The 10 Japanese and Korean firms in the best global brand names 2014 all adopted the graphic loan, except from *Sony* and *Canon*, which however are written in *katakana* (see 5.8 and fn. 35). The common scripts make very convenient to retain the original brand name, at least visually.

Finally, we have stressed the fact that it is not always easy to find an adapted name which works in all the Chinese language markets due to cultural and linguistic differences within the Chinese-speaking world. Thus, firms should carefully take into account regional differences and find a name easy to pronounce in all major language markets, avoiding characters which sound like homonyms with a negative meaning in a given dialect.

## 7 Concluding Remarks

In this paper we tried to offer a general overview of the linguistic strategies adopted in Chinese brand naming creation. As to original Chinese brand names, they are mostly close to the prototypical word, i.e. disyllabic and bimorphemic; the meaning of the constituent parts usually suggest positive associations and/or refer somehow to the benefits associated with the product itself or to its potential consumers. Names which reinterpret the Chinese tradition, i.e. those based on a modified *chéngyǔ*, can also be found.

We showed how the typological distance between the languages of Europe and Sinitic languages, the different writing systems, as well as significant cultural differences, often 'force' Western companies that want to enter the Chinese market to adapt their brand names to various degrees. Moreover, linguistic and cultural differences matter even within the Chinese-speaking world, and thus in some cases different brand names are chosen for different sub-areas (here we considered Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan).

Generally speaking, it appears that meaning is more important than faithfulness in Chinese brand naming: a nice sounding name with a positive meaning seems to be a better translation than an accurate phonetic rendering of the original name, as meaningless sequences of characters are more difficult to memorize. However, even though a translation that combines a suitable meaning with a good approximation of the foreign brand name is obviously a plus, as in the case of *Coca-Cola*, this is not easily accomplished, and indeed just less than a quarter of the top 100 global brand names we analysed adopted this translation strategy (see also the results in Feschterin et al. 2012). Phonetic adaptation is the most frequent choice for brand name translation in our sample, and meaningless foreign-sounding names are indeed a hint for foreign product identification, often associated with high quality, as we have seen. Interestingly, some Chinese brand names are made to sound foreign, often using the Latin alphabet together with a Chinese 'translation', following the same principles as those used in the translation of real foreign brand names.

A special case is that of brand names based on acronyms/initialisms. Acronyms/initialisms are typically used by Chinese companies which market their products abroad, where an alphabetic name can be easily understood, or anyway try to present themselves as 'international'; as a matter of fact, many foreign brand names which are not adapted for the Chinese market are also acronyms/initialisms, thus attesting to the 'globalness' of such names.

In sum, a good understanding of the Chinese linguistic and cultural background is essential in order to understand brand naming in the Chinese-speaking world and to create suitable (and effective) Chinese



versions of foreign brand names. Given the great importance attached to names by Chinese consumers and the consequent impact of names on brand perception, companies should be very careful in choosing a name for the Chinese market.

Despite the fact that this overview is relevant for marketing studies, this paper is above all interesting from a strictly linguistic perspective, since it highlights the word formation strategies employed in brand naming in Chinese, confirming the close link between socio-cultural transformations and lexical change.

## Appendix

### The Top 100 Global Brands According to the *Interbrand 2014* Classification and Their Chinese Version

Brand	Chinese version	Translation strategy
Apple	苹果 <i>píngguǒ</i> 'apple'	Translation
Google	谷歌 <i>gǔ-gē</i> 'valley-song'	Phonetic adaptation
Coca-Cola	可口可乐 <i>kěkǒu-kélè</i> 'tasty-enjoyable'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
IBM	IBM	Original name
Microsoft	微软 <i>wéi-ruǎn</i> 'micro-soft'	Translation
GE	GE	Original name
Samsung	三星 <i>sān-xīng</i> 'three-star'	Graphic loan
Toyota	丰田 <i>fēngtián</i>	Graphic loan
McDonald's	麦当劳 <i>mài-dāng-láo</i> 'wheat-undertake-work'	Phonetic adaptation
Mercedes Benz	奔驰 <i>bēnchí</i> 'run quickly'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
BMW	宝马 <i>bǎo-mǎ</i> 'treasure-horse'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Intel	英特尔 <i>yīng-tè-ěr</i> 'brave-special-you'	Phonetic adaptation
Disney	迪士尼 <i>dí-shì-ní</i> 'enlighten-scholar-nun'	Phonetic adaptation
Cisco	思科 <i>sī-kē</i> 'think-discipline'	Phonetic adaptation
Amazon	亚马逊 <i>yà-mǎ-xùn</i> 'Asia-horse-abdicate'	Phonetic adaptation
Oracle	甲骨文 <i>jiǎgǔwén</i> 'oracle-bone inscriptions'	Translation
HP	惠普 <i>huì-pǔ</i> 'benefit-general'	Phonetic adaptation
Gillette	吉列 <i>jí-liè</i> 'lucky-arrange'	Phonetic adaptation
Louis Vuitton	路易威登 <i>lù-yì-wēi-dēng</i> 'road-easy-power-ascend'	Phonetic adaptation
Honda	本田 <i>běntián</i>	Graphic loan
H&M	H&M	Original name
Nike	耐克 <i>nài-kè</i> 'endure-overcome'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
American Express	美国运通 <i>Měiguó yùn-tōng</i> 'America transport-go. through'	Translation
Pepsi	百事 <i>bǎi-shì</i> 'hundred-thing'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
SAP	SAP	Original name
Ikea	宜家 <i>yí-jiā</i> 'suited-home/family, suited to bringing harmony to a family'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
UPS	UPS	Original name
Ebay	Ebay	Original name
Facebook	Facebook	Original name
Pampers	帮宝适 <i>bāng-bǎo-shì</i> 'help-baby-suitable'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation

Brand	Chinese version	Translation strategy
Volkswagen	大众汽车 <i>dàzhòng qìchē</i> 'people motor.vehicle'	Translation
Kellogg's	家乐氏 <i>jiā-lè-shì</i> 'home-happy-clan/family'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
HSBC	汇丰 <i>huì-fēng</i> 'gather-abundance'	Original name
Budweiser	百威 <i>bǎi-wēi</i> 'hundred-power'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
J.P. Morgan	摩根 <i>mó-gēn</i> 'rub-root'	Phonetic adaptation
Zara	Zara	Original name
Canon	佳能 <i>jiā-néng</i> 'beautiful-ability'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Nescafé	雀巢咖啡 <i>què-cháo kāfēi</i> 'sparrow-nest coffee'	Translation
Ford	福特 <i>fú-tè</i> 'good.fortune-special'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Hyundai	现代 <i>xiàndài</i> 'modern'	Graphic loan
Gucci	古驰 <i>gǔ-chí</i> 'ancient-speed'	Phonetic adaptation
Philips	飞利浦 <i>fēi-lì-pǔ</i> 'fly-benefit-riverside'	Phonetic adaptation
L'Oréal	欧莱雅 <i>ōu-lái-yǎ</i> 'Europe-radish-elegant'	Phonetic adaptation
Accenture	埃森哲 <i>āi-sēn-zhé</i> 'dust-forest-wise'	Phonetic adaptation
Audi	奥迪 <i>ào-dí</i> 'profound-enlighten'	Phonetic adaptation
Hermes	爱马仕 <i>ài-mǎ-shì</i> 'love-horse-official'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Goldman Sachs	高盛 <i>gāo-shèng</i> 'high-prosperous'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Citi	花旗 <i>huāqí</i> 'United States'	Original creation
Siemens	西门子 <i>xī-mén-zǐ</i> 'West-door-son'	Phonetic adaptation
Colgate	高露洁 <i>gāo-lù-jié</i> 'high-dew-clean'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Danone	达能 <i>dá-néng</i> 'reach/arrive-ability/energy'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Sony	索尼 <i>suǒ-ní</i> 'rope-nun'	Phonetic adaptation
AXA	安盛 <i>ān-shèng</i> 'peaceful-flourishing'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Nestlé	雀巢 <i>què-cháo</i> 'sparrow-nest'	Translation
Allianz	安联 <i>ān-lián</i> 'peaceful-unite'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Nissan	日产 <i>rì-chǎn</i> 'Japan-produce/product'	Graphic loan
Thomson Reuters	汤森路透 <i>tāng-sēn-lù-tòu</i> 'soup-forest-road-penetrate'	Phonetic adaptation
Cartier	卡地亚 <i>kǎ-dì-yà</i> 'card-earth-Asia'	Phonetic adaptation
Adidas	阿迪达斯 <i>ā-dí-dá-sī</i> 'PREF-enlighten-reach-this'	Phonetic adaptation
Porsche	保时捷 <i>bǎo-shí-jié</i> 'guarantee-time-fast'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Caterpillar	卡特彼勒 <i>kǎ-tè-bǐ-lè</i> 'card-special-that-bridle'	Phonetic adaptation

Brand	Chinese version	Translation strategy
Xerox	施乐 <i>shī-lè</i> 'bestow-joy'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
Morgan Stanley	摩根士丹 <i>mó-gēn-shì-dān</i> 'rub-root-scholar-red'	Phonetic adaptation
Panasonic (Matsushita)	松下 <i>sōngxia</i>	Graphic loan
Shell	壳牌 <i>ké-pái</i> 'shell-brand'	Hybrid
3M	3M	Original name
Discovery	探索 <i>tàn-suǒ</i> 'explore, explorations'	Translation
KFC	肯德基 <i>kě-n dé-jī</i> 'be.willing-virtue-foundation'	Phonetic adaptation
Visa	Visa	Original name
Prada	普拉达 <i>pǔ-lā-dá</i> 'common-pull-reach'	Phonetic adaptation
Tiffany & co.	蒂芙尼 <i>dī-fú-ní</i> 'stem.of.fruit-lotus-nun'	Phonetic adaptation
Sprite	雪碧 <i>xuě-bì</i> 'snow-jade.green'	Original creation
Burberry	博柏利 <i>bó-bǎi-lì</i> 'abundant-cypress-benefit'	Phonetic adaptation
Kia	起亚 <i>qǐ-yà</i> 'arise-Asia'	Graphic loan
Santander	桑坦德银行 <i>sāng-tǎn-dé yínháng</i> 'mulberry-flat-virtue bank'	Hybrid
Starbucks	星巴克 <i>xīng-bā-kè</i> 'star-hope.for-overcome/gram'	Hybrid
Adobe	Adobe	Original name
Johnson&Johnson	强生 <i>qiáng-shēng</i> 'strong-life'	Phonetic-semantic adaptation
John Deere	约翰迪尔 <i>yuē-hàn-dí-ěr</i> 'approximately-writing.brush-enlighten-you'	Phonetic adaptation
MTV	MTV	Original name
DHL	DHL	Original name
Chevrolet	雪佛兰 <i>xuě-fó-lán</i> 'snow-Buddha-orchid'	Phonetic adaptation
Ralph Lauren	Ralph Lauren	Original name
Duracell	金霸王 <i>jīn-bà-wáng</i> 'gold-overlord'	Original creation
Jack Daniel's	杰克丹尼 <i>jié-kè-dān-ní</i> 'hero-overcome-red-nun'	Phonetic adaptation
Johnnie Walker	尊尼获加 <i>zūn-ní-huò-jīā</i> 'honor-nun-obtain-add'	Phonetic adaptation
Harley-Davidson	哈雷戴维森 <i>hā-léi-dài-wéi-sēn</i> 'exhale-thunder-wear-preserve-forest'	Phonetic adaptation
Mastercard	万事达卡 <i>wànshì-dá-kǎ</i> 'everything-reach/arrive-card'	Hybrid
Kleenex	舒洁 <i>shū-jié</i> 'relax/comfortable-clean'	Original creation
Smirnoff	斯米诺 <i>sī-mǐ-nuò</i> 'this-rice-promise'	Phonetic adaptation
Land Rover	路虎 <i>lù-hú</i> 'road-tiger'	Original creation
FedEx	FedEx	Original name
Corona Extra	科罗娜特级 <i>kē-luó-nà tè-jí</i> 'discipline-net-graceful special-grade'	Hybrid
Huawei	华为 <i>huá-wéi</i> 'China-be'	Chinese name
Heineken	喜力 <i>xǐ-lì</i> 'happy-power' (Cantonese: <i>hei2lik6</i> )	Phonetic adaptation (from Cantonese)

Brand	Chinese version	Translation strategy
Pizza Hut	必胜客 <i>bì-shèng-kè</i> 'certainly-win-guest'	Original creation
Hugo Boss	Hugo Boss	Original name
Nokia	诺基亚 <i>nuò-jī-yà</i> 'promise-foundation-Asia'	Phonetic adaptation
GAP	GAP	Original name
Nintendo	任天堂 <i>rén-tiāntáng</i> 'leave.everything.to-heaven'	Graphic loan

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# Chinese Volunteering in Africa Drivers, Issues and Future Prospects

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**Abstract** Due to the growing importance of people-to-people diplomacy in China's global strategies, this is a momentous time for China's international development volunteering. Drawing from underexploited Chinese sources, the paper shows that international volunteering has the potential for enhancing China's public appeal globally and giving a 'softer' connotation to China's aid to Africa. In this paper the policy, practices, and discourses about China's voluntary service are examined and framed within the context of China's soft power strategies. Moreover, the recent domestic debate on shortcomings of the 'China Foreign Aid Youth Volunteers Program' in Africa and the new directions suggested to the country's leadership by influential Chinese academics are critically analysed. The focus is on the tailoring of a new political and ideological 'space' for the Chinese NGOs as implementers of future international volunteering programs. In spite of considerable debates and evolutions, Chinese international volunteering programs seems to remain under tight state control and to be best understood as social engineering efforts, with China's soft power as their main objective.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 State-managed Volunteer Service in Post-Mao China. – 3 Domestic Volunteering, Harmonious Society and Soft Power. – 4 The 'Going Out' of China's Volunteer Service. – 5 The Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program in China's International Aid. – 6 International Volunteering, South-south Cooperation and Soft Power. – 7 Sending Volunteers Abroad: Pathways to Best Serve China's Strategic Interests. – 8 Domestic Volunteering: NGOs Coming Together with the State. – 9 A Similar Pathway for International Volunteering? – 10 Tapping into a Previously Overlooked Resource. – 11 Chinese Scholars as Heralds of Ongoing Shifts in International Volunteering. – 12 First Steps Along the New Pathway? – 13 Implications of the New Role for NGOs in China's International Volunteer Strategies. – 14 Conclusions.

**Keywords** Chinese youth volunteering. Chinese NGOs. China-Africa relations. Chinese soft power. China's foreign aid.

## 1 Introduction

Due to the growing importance of people-to-people diplomacy in China's strategies in Africa, this is a momentous time for China's international development volunteer initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The general outline of the work was discussed jointly by the authors, however Antonella Ceccagno is responsible for sections 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and Sofia Graziani for sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. The introduction and conclusions have been written jointly by the authors.

Drawing from underexploited Chinese sources, this article addresses the origins, development, internal contestation, and changing features of Chinese international aid strategies centered on voluntary service.

Development aid is a growing area of engagement between governments and citizens of parts of the world with different global leverage and power. Volunteering in the domain of international development has recently been dubbed 'a contested field' given that it perpetuates global asymmetrical relations. For instance, Georgeou (2012, p. 54) points out that development volunteers have become the human face of government-funded programs serving the dominant political and economic interest of donor states.

The Chinese government undertook to send volunteers abroad only in 2002 (Li 2006). Chinese international voluntary service, therefore, is a relatively recent development.

Even though the first batch of Chinese international volunteers was sent to Laos, and Africa officially became a destination for Chinese volunteers only in 2004 according to some authors (Li, Luo 2013) or 2005 according to other authors (Wang, Huang, Liu 2012), Africa is by far the largest beneficiary of Chinese international voluntary service. Therefore, in this paper Chinese international voluntary service and Chinese voluntary service in Africa are intended as interchangeable.

This paper examines the practice and policy of China's international aid voluntary service and frames the issues surrounding new approaches and future prospects for voluntary service in Africa within the context of China's soft power strategies.

China's international voluntary service springs out of government-sponsored domestic volunteering programs centered on youth and builds on a decade-long experience in organizing volunteers at home. Its development is part of a larger set of the Chinese state's direct and indirect diplomatic activities conducted in the framework of Beijing's growing concern with improving China's image around the world, and in Africa in particular. Besides sending volunteers, in fact, the new Chinese soft power strategies towards Africa also include many other activities, some of which are connected with voluntary service, such as liaising with selected African NGOs active on social issues and indirectly engaging in philanthropic charity by lobbying for donations Chinese private and state-owned enterprises that work in Africa (Brenner 2012).<sup>2</sup>

While both voluntary service in China and China's presence in Africa have been the subject of many, often controversial, debates among schol-

2 This is one of the main roles played by the Chinese-African People's Friendship Organization (CAPFA), supervised by The Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. According to Brenner (2012, p. 143), «CAPFA function as a charity arm of Chinese enterprises» and its work is conducted in accordance with Beijing's aim of improving China's image in Africa.

ars (Ding 2005; Yang 2005; Rolandsen 2010; Brautigam 2009; King 2013; Fijalkowski 2011; Sun 2014, among others), there is a lack of academic literature in regard to Chinese international voluntary service and its role in Chinese strategies in Africa. In English-language scholarship this is an often-mentioned topic, yet no comprehensive analysis has so far been conducted concerning its drivers, development, and implications. This issue, however, is of crucial importance if we are to understand the multiple facets of China's 'going out' strategy. This paper undertakes to bridge this gap.

The first part of the article documents the origins and development of China's international volunteer programs and explores the content, practices, and discourses animating the Chinese approach to international voluntary work within the larger framework of China's growing international outreach and global agency. It undertakes to analyse the critical role the Chinese government attaches to citizens' participation in volunteer service both at home and abroad as a tool for engineering support for the government agenda and for enhancing China's soft power. The article focuses on the China Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program (also known as Foreign Aid Youth Volunteers Program) and shows that China's international aid volunteering as a government sponsored policy has emerged as an expansion of the approach and programmes already at work at the domestic level.

The second part highlights the recent Chinese government's perception of voluntary service as having the potential for giving new connotations to Chinese aid to Africa. On the basis of crucial but underexplored materials, the article documents and critically analyses the recent domestic debate on limits and shortcomings of the China Foreign Aid Youth Volunteers Program in Africa and the new directions suggested to the country's leadership by Chinese influential academics writing in official journals. The focus is on possible pathways of reorganization of Chinese international volunteering, including the tailoring of a new political and ideological 'space' for inclusion of Chinese NGOs as implementers of future international volunteering programs within the new Chinese soft-power strategies in Africa. The article undertakes a comparison of the decades-long process of carving out a space for volunteering and social organizations within China with the parallel process now taking place at the international level, and the resistance to this trend.

This article makes a case regarding the evolution of China international volunteering programs, i.e. that in spite of considerable debates and evolutions, these programs remain under tight state control and are best understood as social engineering efforts, with China's soft power as its main objective.

The coupling of soft power strategies and tight state control, however, remains problematic, according to some outstanding analysts. In his study on China's global presence, David Shambaugh (2013, p. 214) argues that while in Joseph Nye's original work (2004), «soft power appeal [...] comes

almost entirely and intrinsically from *society* – not from government», China's conception of soft power is state-generated. In his analysis, political control over society is actually an obstacle to China's attempt to build its cultural soft power worldwide. As this article shows, the Chinese academic elite does not question the top down character of the state's soft power strategies focusing on international volunteering but only suggests the shifts that may increase the effectiveness of those strategies.

## 2 State-managed Volunteer Service in Post-Mao China

In the early 2000s, as part and parcel of its strategy for global influence and soft power construction, China officially began to send 'volunteers' abroad through government sponsored programs that built on a decade-long experience of organizing volunteers at home.

With a history tracing back to the Mao era, when Lei Feng, the selfless soldier who died in August 1962, was turned into a moral model for all Chinese, official volunteer service re-emerged in the early 1990s in the context of China's deepening market reforms and the shedding of more and more welfare responsibilities by the state. At the national level formal volunteering has been sponsored by the government and organized through two main official channels: the Community Service Volunteers organizations under the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA); and the China Youth Volunteer Association (CYVA) within the framework of the CYL-initiated Young Volunteers Action (*qingnian zhiyuanzhe xingdong*).<sup>3</sup> Besides, many other official or semi-official organizations providing volunteer services have been set up, one prominent example being the China Charity Federation and its local branches (Ding 2004; Li 2007, pp. 51-56). At the same time, with the deepening of the market reforms and government encouragement, new opportunities have opened up for the growth of relatively autonomous social organizations, whose relationship with the State has been the object of much, often controversial, debate among Western scholars. While the government recognized the need to allow the expansion of the non-governmental sector to address unmet social needs, improve governance and prevent the rise of social instability, various measures have been introduced since the 1990s to monitor their activities and ensure that they won't challenge the CCP authority (Ma 2006, Saich 2000, among others). As such, organizations providing volunteer service in the welfare sector have been particularly encouraged by the state and even unregistered groups have found their space of action (Xu, Ngai 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Founded in 1994 by the CYL, the CYVA is the largest voluntary service organization in China.

Encouraged and praised in official speeches by Party and state leaders as well as in the media since the late 1990s, volunteering has also made its appearance in Party and government policy documents (Ding 2005, p. 9). At the same time, the Young Volunteers Action has developed into many projects (Ding 2005, pp. 4-9), one of the most popular being the Plan of College Graduate Volunteer Service in Western China (*daxuesheng zhiyuan fuwu xibu jihua*), which since 2003 has sent university graduates to underdeveloped Western regions (Gongqingtuan 2007, pp. 501-502).<sup>4</sup> Specific measures and preferential policies have been introduced to motivate students to participate (Ding 2005, p. 9). For instance, college and university students who have successfully completed long-term volunteer service organized by the CYL may receive preferential treatment when it comes to admission to graduate schools.<sup>5</sup>

Hustinx, Handy and Cnaan (2012, p. 57) argue that in contemporary China «most volunteer efforts are (in)directly government initiated or government funded» and «volunteering may be seen as ... [a] response to government initiatives rather than one that is purely voluntary». Drawing on the idea of 'post-revolutionary mobilization' as conceptualized by White in 1990, Hustinx and colleagues argue that most volunteering is part of a state-led institutionalized mobilization used by the post-Mao regime as an instrument of political and social 'engineering' aimed at promoting the government agenda.

Xu (2012) shows that at the national level two parallel systems have been established to monitor the voluntary sector: the Ministry of Civil Affairs System and the CYL system. In fact – as Xu argues – in the last two decades the CYL has acquired a dominant status in the voluntary sector and its power in governing volunteering has gradually strengthened within the bureaucratic system. If on the one hand, the CYL system has provided space for the development of self-organized voluntary social organizations (VSOs), its 'ascribed political capital' as the CCP's 'main assistant' (*zhushou*) and 'reserve force' (*houbei jun*) has helped the CYL local organizations to advance their presence at the grassroots and legitimize the activities of unregistered (and thus technically illegal) groups whose action is considered politically safe and beneficial to the social welfare.<sup>6</sup>

Top-down volunteering has been especially targeted on youth, particularly the well-educated who are largely perceived as the future backbone

4 The project became a national policy jointly issued by the CYL, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Personnel (see Notice on College Graduate Volunteer Service 2003).

5 Information acquired during fieldwork conducted by Sofia Graziani in Beijing in 2006 and again in 2011 thanks to the Italian Ministry of University and Research (MIUR) fellowship.

6 On the historical and political role of the CYL in the PRC, see Graziani 2013.

of society (Hustinx, Handy, Cnaan 2012). This trend results from two main government concerns: rising levels of unemployment among young graduates (especially since the early 2000s) as well as the need to improve the moral and ideological education of the younger generation. Indeed, following the 1989 Tian'anmen student movement, the CCP called for an enhanced concentration on ideological and political education and the promotion of officially-desired moral values and collective goals among the young. As such, patriotism, now emphasized as the Party main source of legitimacy, was identified as a core value that had the potential to unite all young people under the same banner, equating the love for the motherland with the love for the CCP (Rosen 2004, on patriotic education campaign Wang 2008, Zhao 1998, among others). With a young generation increasingly individualistic and success-oriented, at a time when old propaganda themes and techniques are losing ground in favor of new and softer language and approaches (Brady 2008), the discourse on volunteering has also been reshaped to merge old and new themes: the politicized collective rhetoric of selfless contribution by model citizens (reminiscent of the Maoist ethics of the 1960s) has thus been accommodated with new notions of individual choice and flexibility (Rolandsen 2010). At the same time, volunteer service has been officially constructed as serving both the motherland and the realization of the self.

Not by chance, in 1993 the CYL CC urged youth to play a more active role in the country's economic and social development (Wang 1993). At the same time, it initiated the Young Volunteers Action as an organized movement with the aim of contributing to the construction of a 'socialist spiritual civilization' (*shehuizhuyi jingsheng wenming*) and improving the whole 'quality' (*suzhi*)<sup>7</sup> of the young (Cao 2004, pp. 215-224). Since then, volunteering as a new and soft means of social control and regimentation of the youth has become one of the most important task of the CYL. In fact, the CYL-founded CYVA, while organizing a growing number of young volunteers, has maintained significant ties with the Party-state,<sup>8</sup> being utilized by the Party apparatus as a propaganda tool to reach a broader group of young, well-educated people who might otherwise be outside Party's circles (Rolandsen 2010, pp. 142-147). At the same time, as shown above,

7 The term *suzhi* has broad connotations in today's China, generally referring to prescribed social norms (on this issue see, for instance, Yan Hairong 2003). 'Spiritual civilization' is also a term with broad connotations encompassing a set of values for Chinese society. According to Anne-Marie Brady, through setting social norms, spiritual civilization activities in post-Mao China are a soft form of social control and regimentation of the public minds (Brady 2008, p. 117).

8 In 1998 the CYL CC set up the «youth volunteer guiding centre» in charge of planning, coordinating, and guiding volunteer service, that also serves as the Secretariat of the CYVA (Gongqingtuan 2010, p. 294).

the CYL has stepped up efforts to advance its presence at the grassroots level and establish ties with self-organized groups.

Thus, since the 1990s volunteer service sector has gradually expanded, involving both official and self-organized grassroots groups, mainly as a response to government initiatives and encouragement. In particular, youth volunteering has been largely organized and overseen (both directly and indirectly) by the CYL as a tool for channeling youth activism towards officially accepted goals and away from politically risky activities and as a means for 'cultivating' the young generation. At the same time, the government and its related agencies have established ties with newly emerged VSOs so as to boost social support and public participation within acceptable boundaries. It is against this framework that a domestic debate has developed on the need to turn the government role from direct involvement to supporting and commissioning non-profit organizations (Yang 2005). This issue will be discussed further below.

### 3 Domestic Volunteering, Harmonious Society and Soft Power

Volunteer service has been highly encouraged in China since 2006 in conjunction with the promotion by the CCP leaders of the new political agenda of the 'harmonious society' (*hexie shehui*), aimed at promoting social justice and reducing social inequalities resulting from almost two decades of economic reforms (Miranda 2006, Miller 2007, among others). At the same time, it coincides with the CCP renovated emphasis on creating a «socialist core value system» and improving public morality among the population (Miller 2007). As Saich argues, these developments reflected political leaders awareness of the need to «lay down 'moral and ideological foundations' underpinning the policies to build the 'harmonious society'» (Saich 2011, p. 98). As such, volunteer spirit – officially defined as embodying values such as «devotion, fraternal love, mutual help, progress» (*fengxian, you'ai, huzhu, jinbu*) – was increasingly perceived as a positive instrument to combat the growing individualism in society and fill the 'moral vacuum' produced by the CCP-promoted market reforms. Not by chance, in the mid-2000s voluntary service started to be narrated as a morally superior behavior (rooted in both traditional culture and Maoist revolutionary tradition), beneficial to the building of the government-advocated harmonious society (Chen 2006, among others).

The introduction of the 'harmonious society' concept into the Party ideology and the government agenda was followed by an unprecedented attention to avoiding that rising social tensions and problems, such as unemployment, could eventually explode into 'chaos' and undermine the CCP authority. The lessons learned from the colour revolutions in a number of former communist states in the early 2000s further increased Chinese



leaders awareness of the potential dangers of genuine civil society. With 'stability maintenance' (*weihu wending*) becoming a top priority, the leadership increased efforts to enhance control mechanisms, advance the Party presence at the grassroots and steer the development of a politically safe Chinese civil society that would improve governance and serve the CCP's ends (Brady 2012, pp. 23-24; Teets 2013; Thornton 2013). The idea of civil society as a social space to be reached by the Party's ideological and political work and filled by social groups that are expected to develop the «citizens' political consciousness, citizens' strong sense of social responsibility and [...] a true and rich compassion and other desirable moral qualities» (Gao 2007, pp. 74-75) was elaborated in a 2007 article which appeared in some internal Party journals (*Dangzheng ganbu luntan* and *Lilun yu gaige*) and was then reprinted in the CCP Central Committee theoretical journal, *Qiushi* (Seeking Truth) (Gao 2007). According to Brady, it is a response to the government's ever-increasing awareness that non-government organizations could become agents for political change, that civic 'participation' has been emphasized since the mid-2000s, with the CCP advocating and supervising large-scale volunteer projects (Brady 2012, pp. 23-24).

It is against this backdrop that in 2008 China experienced a wave of volunteering, whose main impetus came from youths (Clark 2012, pp. 183-186). This wave was prompted by a series of mass events, the most prominent being the long-planned Beijing Olympic Games and the unpredicted Wenchuan earthquake. While the latter event saw a large number of volunteers spontaneously assisting victims, the Beijing Olympics saw half a million volunteers participating in a large-scale project, advocated and overseen by the state, aimed at involving as many Chinese as possible in the production and showcasing of a 'new' positive national image. In fact, huge numbers of volunteers, especially university students, were selected and trained for the event, being molded into 'model citizens' (De Kloet, Pak Lei Chong, Landsberger 2011).

By the end of 2000s, against the backdrop of the global financial crisis and China's increased international status and self-confidence, the domestic media started to narrate voluntary service as a powerful 'social soft power' (*shehui ruan shili*) tool. On December 9, 2009, *Jinan Daily* published a theoretical forum entitled «Volunteer service is a powerful social soft power», stating that the genuine participation and selfless contribution of volunteers in both the Sichuan earthquake and the Olympic Games proved that the development of volunteering in China had entered a new phase and had become indispensable to a 'civilized society', embodying cultural values deemed important to «elevate the country's soft power internation-

ally» (Shehui ruanshili 2009).<sup>9</sup> The concept of 'social soft power' had just been put forward by Ding Yuanzhu, the Director of the Research Centre for Volunteering and Welfare at Peking University, in an article appeared in *Wenhui bao*. Ding stresses the importance of forging 'social soft power' as a component of a country overall soft power, defining it as «a general mood, a cohesive force and the attraction established by the members of a country's own society through every kind of cultural activity, social activity and behaviour that can reflect the value of human progress» (Ding 2009). His elaboration of the concept of 'social soft power' is particularly interesting as it adds an international dimension to domestic volunteering: by linking citizen's civic participation through volunteer service to the building of a general, predominant, mood in the society, Ding treats volunteer service as an activity that will build 'social cohesion' (*shehui ningju*) - and thus social stability - at home and in turn elevate the country's attraction vis-à-vis other nations.

In turn, the social atmosphere - created by citizen's civic participation through volunteer service - is deemed to reflect a country's own cultural and value system.

After experiencing the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake I firmly believe that China's volunteer spirit is rooted in China's traditional culture. Today... volunteer action is deciphering again the traditional moral excellence of the Chinese people. [...] A nation that in facing difficulties is able of mutual help and mutual support, will obtain even more the praise and the trust of the international community [...] (Ding 2009)

As such, volunteer service may serve the purpose of showcasing China's 'traditional values' internationally, thus contributing to the government recent attempt to elevate China's cultural soft power worldwide.

Thus, volunteering is encouraged as a desirable form of institutionalized citizen participation taking place within pre-defined ideological and political boundaries. It is encouraged as an instrument of political and social 'engineering' aimed at promoting a government agenda and supporting the CCP's goals. In fact, being located within the broader discourses of the harmonious society and soft power, it is conceptualized as conducive to a cohesive, politically safe, 'civil society' in which social conflicts are 'harmonized' and as instrumental to the realization of the country's national interests.

9 In 2013 the same theme was covered in the central Party organ *Guangming ribao*, highlighting the potential of volunteers as a newly emerging force in the construction of 'civilized cities' (Gu 2013).

#### 4 The 'Going Out' of China's Volunteer Service

As mentioned above, China officially begun to send volunteers abroad in the early 2000s when two distinct government-sponsored national programs were initiated. The China Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program (*Zhongguo qingnian zhiyuanzhe haiwai fuwu jihua*) was launched jointly by the CYL CC and the CYVA in May 2002. Young Chinese started to be dispatched to developing countries to provide long-term, generally one-year, development assistance in various fields including Chinese language teaching, physical education, medical treatment, information technology and agricultural technique (Gongqingtuan 2007, pp. 503-504). As an expansion of the above-mentioned CYL-managed Youth Volunteer Movement, this international program fully represents the 'going out' (*zou-chu guomen*) of China's domestic volunteering (Li 2006).

Another program, called the Chinese Language Teachers Volunteering Program (*Guoji Hanyu jiaoshi Zhongguo zhiyuanzhe jihua*) was approved by the Ministry of Education and has been implemented by the Office of Chinese Language Council (*Hanban*) since 2004, after a pilot project had dispatched 40 volunteers in Thailand and Philippines in 2003 (Ministry of Education n.d.).

Despite being distinct programs, the Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program and the Chinese Language Teachers Volunteering Program tend to overlap in Chinese accounts of the international volunteer service. Moreover they are often confused especially when it comes to involved the government agencies and the numbers of dispatched volunteers. While the Chinese Language Teachers Volunteering Program is open to educated Chinese citizens of any age under 60 years old - even though it seems that young graduates in their twenties participate in large numbers (Song 2008, p. 105) - and sends Chinese language volunteers worldwide, accounting for around 10,000 volunteers dispatched in 89 countries by 2010 (Gao 2012, p. 35), the China Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program is targeted at young people and is designed to bring assistance to developing nations (especially to Africa) as part and parcel of China's foreign aid. Moreover, despite being much more limited in terms of numbers than the Language Teachers Volunteering Program, it is expected to grow in the near future, eventually becoming an effective and influential tool of China's soft power in Africa.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> With the exception of Kenneth King (2013) and Deborah Brautigam (2009), no one has paid attention to the limited reach of this project so far, acknowledging that numbers remain small.

## 5 The Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program in China's International Aid

Begun with the assignment of a small group of volunteers to Laos (Li 2008), in little more than a decade (2002-2013) the Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program has dispatched 590 Chinese volunteers to 22 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America (Huang et al. 2013b, p. 15; same numbers found in Gongqingtuan 2013). So far, young volunteers have provided assistance in three main fields: cultural education (50%), science and technology service (31%), medical and health treatment (16%) (Huang et al. 2013a, p. 59; Gongqingtuan 2003).

Africa is by far the largest recipient (69%), with 408 volunteers dispatched to 16 countries. While the first group of Chinese volunteers was officially sent to Africa in October 2004 as part of the Volunteer Program for International Chinese Teachers of the Office of Chinese Language Council (Hanyu jiaoshi zhiyuanzhe 2004), young volunteer assistance to Africa began as part of the Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program in 2005 with the assignment of the first 12 volunteers to Ethiopia where they worked on programs dealing with methane development, Chinese teaching and information technology (Cui, Shi, Li 2005; Shinn, Eisenman 2012, p. 154). According to available data, Ethiopia is the African country that received most volunteers under this program from 2005 to 2009 (Wu, Zhang, Xu 2010, p. 68).

According to Chinese scholars, in the period 2005-2009 the China Youth Volunteers Overseas Service developed on a larger scale (Zhiyuanzhe de bufa 2013). In fact, in 2005 the program was formally brought into China's government policy on foreign aid (Gongqingtuan 2007, pp. 503-504; Li 2006). At the same time, it began to be known as Foreign Aid Youth Volunteers (*yuanwai qingnian zhiyuanzhe*) program, being run by three main agencies: the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Committee of the CYL (Wang, Huang, Liu 2012). In 2006 international youth volunteers first appeared in a government paper on China's African policy, as part of the «people-to-people exchanges» (*minjian jiao-wang*) (State Council 2006) and references to young volunteers were then included in FOCAC agreements. At the Beijing Summit and third FOCAC the Chinese government decided to expand the program, setting the goal of sending 300 youth volunteers to deliver assistance to African countries in various fields over the following three years (FOCAC 2006). From 2010 onward, however, the program experienced a low tide as the government started to rethink it, while – as it will be discussed below – Chinese scholars began to provide suggestions for improving the program and enhancing its public appeal in Africa. While in FOCAC IV in Egypt (2009) there was no specific commitment from the Chinese side, volunteers were back in

the agreements of FOCAC V where it was said that «China will continue to send young volunteers to African countries and encourage them to play a positive role in community building and social welfare sectors» (FOCAC 2012). A similar commitment has been reiterated in the last FOCAC (2015). At the same time, references to young volunteers were included in China's White Papers on foreign aid (Information Office of the State Council of the PRC 2011, 2014). As such, in 2012 they were back on the agenda.

Volunteers are recruited through government-controlled channels and are selected by the CYVA under the CYL. According to central directives and national regulations, in order to be eligible candidates are required to be Chinese citizens in the 20-35 age-bracket. Besides meeting health and education requirements, candidates are required to be devoted to the motherland, happy to make a contribution to the collective and love volunteer service. Moreover, priority is given to candidates who have successfully participated in CYL sponsored youth volunteers long-term service project at the domestic level or those who have been publicly honoured as outstanding volunteers by the CYL or CYVA organizations. The selection process also includes a political investigation on the candidate (Gongqingtuan 2006; Ministry of Commerce 2004). In some cases, the central government requires that a province, municipality or organization provide volunteers for a particular country. For example, the volunteers for Seychelles come from the Guangzhou Youth Volunteers Association, while volunteers sent to Togo in 2009 have been recruited by the Shenzhen city government (Shinn, Eisenman 2012, p. 154).

Yet, at the local level further conditions may be set for volunteer recruitment. In 2008, for instance, the CYL committee of Chongqing municipality launched a project for volunteer service in Mauritius where a total of 41 young volunteers were to be sent over five years. In 2013 a new round was announced, calling local organizations of the CYL and the CYVA to select 17 volunteers to be dispatched to Mauritius to participate in projects related mainly to Chinese language teaching. Here political affiliation, that is CCP or CYL membership, was mentioned under the heading recruitment terms. Furthermore, the evaluation process by CYL and CYVA included reference to a preliminary screening on the candidate's 'spiritual and ideological quality' (Chongqing shi 2013). Similar provisions are found in the most recent recruitment announcements (March 2015). These practices clearly reveal that strict ideological conformism is required by the Chinese authorities and that organizers pay crucial attention on recruiting people who are 'politically reliable'.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The organizers' concern of recruiting people who are 'politically reliable' may also explain why sometimes only volunteers working for state-owned enterprises are selected (Brautigam 2009, pp. 124-125).

## 6 International Volunteering, South-south Cooperation and Soft Power

International volunteering is a crucial aspect of China's current diplomatic strategy, being understood as a 'people-to-people' aid program designed to enhance China's public appeal and global influence.

While scholarly attention is mainly focused on China's domestic volunteering, its growing international voluntary programs are still scarcely investigated. Only a few Western scholars have briefly mentioned international volunteering in their analysis of China's aid, diplomacy and soft power in Africa. As such, China's youth volunteers have been defined as «goodwill ambassadors» (Alden 2007, p. 27) or «the face of China's newest soft power aid programme» (Brautigam 2009, p. 125). In her book, Brautigam (2009) refers to youth volunteers serving in Africa as the human resource side of China's soft power and suggests that a more visible 'people-to-people' aid program could play a role in China's attempt to reassure the world that its rise will be 'peaceful'. The Chinese government has indeed been recently attempting to officially present China's foreign policy approach as based on the ideal of a 'harmonious world' and on the principles of peace, cooperation and common prosperity so as to persuade the international community that it will not be a threat to other nations (Chen 2013, Ding 2008, among the others).

Similarly, Kurlantzick (2009) places China's youth volunteer program within the realm of 'people-to-people contacts', whose improvement is fully recognized by the Chinese government as crucial for engaging non-governmental actors (the broader society) and boosting China's public appeal in Africa. Similarly, D'Hooghe (2011, p. 23) considers young volunteers as new actors of China's public diplomacy, with the potential of being better trusted by the international community than government officials and contributing more directly than traditional state actors to promoting the nation's image and expanding its global appeal.

Chinese scholars mention the volunteer scheme under the rubric of public diplomacy (Luo, Zhang 2009), with Liu Haifang (2008, p. 22) and Li Baoping (2007, pp. 8-13) considering youth volunteering as the most important medium for propagating Chinese culture among the African people and promoting friendship. Li also stresses the potential of volunteers, working «without utilitarian aims... but with just devotion and generosity», to «weaken, relieve, diminish» the Western discourses of the «China threat» and Chinese «neo-colonialism». Great emphasis on the role of volunteers as instrumental in forging the perception of China is also placed by Gao Aihui (2012), who defines volunteers as «a window through which the world understands China». These accounts show that volunteers are expected to enhance the nation's attractiveness to the outside

world and ultimately serve the nation's diplomatic strategy and interests, by spreading culture, thus reflecting the mainstream conceptualization of Chinese soft power as cultural influence.

At the same time, Chinese scholars and officials have framed international volunteering within the historically rooted discourse of south-south cooperation, based on ethical principles of equality and mutuality among developing nations. In Chinese discourse on international volunteer these two dimensions are often intertwined. For instance, in discussing Chinese volunteers in Africa, Li (2007, p. 11) emphasizes the role of volunteers in enhancing mutual understanding and friendship, but at the same time refers to the volunteer scheme in Africa as a channel for spreading Chinese culture and value conceptions and bringing about 'civilization, affluence and prosperity'. Similar interpretations can be found in official sources. At the 2006 annual plenary session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Xu Feng from CYL CC delivered a speech that linked youth volunteers' service to the promotion of world peace. In her view, the development of the Youth Volunteer Overseas Service would benefit the enhancement of sino-foreign friendship and cooperation as well as the establishment of China's international image as a 'responsible great power'. At the same time, international volunteering is conceived as a channel for the training of «young outstanding talents with international vision» (Kaizhan haiwai zhiyuan fuwu 2006). Similar descriptions can be found in official reports as well as media accounts. In a 2011 article published in the monthly journal *International communication (Duiwai chuanbo)*, the vice-director of the Youth Volunteer Department of the CYL CC and vice-secretary of the CYVA, Pi Jun, stressed the crucial role of volunteer initiatives in establishing China's international image and training «youth outstanding talents with international vision». Then, he writes that the youth volunteers overseas service project had «huge room for development ahead» (*juda de fazhan kongjian*) and should be further expanded, promoting its place within China's overall diplomacy and turning youth volunteers into emissaries of the historically and culturally rooted idea of «harmony» (*hexie*) at a time when 'soft power' had become a prominent factor in the international competition that characterized a multipolar world and a global economy (Pi 2011).

As with much of China's rhetoric and discourse on foreign aid (King 2013, pp. 1-13), Chinese international volunteers thus appear to be framed within two broader intertwined discourses: one emphasizing ethical principles of south-south cooperation, such as solidarity, mutual trust, mutual benefit, cooperation, common development and friendship, and the other emphasizing the concept of soft power, suggestive of international competition among the nations, and largely equated by Chinese scholars and officials with an effort aimed at spreading Chinese culture abroad and «reaching out and winning the hearts and minds» of African peoples. Yet,

the question of the effectiveness of the soft power strategies remains problematic given the very nature of China's volunteer service as a state-generated and managed initiative.

## 7 Sending Volunteers Abroad: Pathways to Best Serve China's Strategic Interests

In early 2010s, a number of papers appeared in Chinese journals (Wang et al. 2012, Huang et al. 2013a, Women de jianyi 2013, among others) focusing on one or more aspects of the China Foreign Aid Youth Volunteers Program. The article «Rethinking Chinese Public Diplomacy in Africa: The Foreign Aid Youth Volunteers Program as a Case Study» by Wang and his colleagues (2012) is the most articulate and comprehensive public discussion on the issue of Chinese international voluntary service. The article - which appeared in *Dangdai shijie*, a journal published by the International Department of the CCP's Central Committee - adopts a critical stance towards the Program, highlights its limitations and shortcomings and suggests that Chinese policymakers adopt a new approach to international volunteering. Thus, this is an important article because it reflects an acknowledgment by the Chinese elites that some aspects of the Chinese activism in Africa do not go in the direction of the Chinese goals on the African continent and, contrary to Chinese expectations, are even producing negative reactions among Africans.

Wang and his colleagues point out that the Program is characterized by unclear and often unrealistic goals, inability to evaluate the impact of the Chinese voluntary work, and lack of clearly defined roles for the involved actors. The same vagueness in roles and goals - it is argued in the article - also characterizes other Chinese public diplomacy programs.

In particular, the authors point out that China still lacks a clear and focused positioning of the issue of international volunteering as a crucial part of China's public diplomacy. This is the result of huge differences in the understanding of the Program and its role among the decision-makers and policy implementers in different ministries. Groups of contending officials pull in different directions China's policy on international volunteering and bring about inconsistent implementations of the policy.<sup>12</sup> As a result, bottlenecks and even failures characterize the implementation of the Program.

The authors therefore make a plea for a shift in China's international volunteers' policy to go in a direction that best serves Beijing's global interests, including presenting a better image of China to the world.

<sup>12</sup> Lack of coordination and overlapping among ministries in Chinese international volunteering had also been highlighted by Li Baoping back in 2006.



Wang, Huang and Liu (2012) lament the lack of communication and coordination among the Chinese government's bodies involved in international volunteering, and point out that the same lack of communication and coordination has also emerged between China as a donor and the recipient African countries. This situation results in diverging expectations in China and in Africa: some of the Chinese institutions involved interpret the international volunteers role as 'cultural ambassadors' as a top priority, while other Chinese institutional actors together with recipient countries in Africa expect Chinese volunteers to be actively involved as specialists and to disseminate advanced knowledge and practical skills in fields relevant for the economic development of the areas involved.

Thus, this highly political paper addresses the crucial issue of which approach best serves China's long term strategic interests and, in particular, best fosters an 'all-round strategic partnership' with Africa and which approach is counterproductive for China and risks engendering mistrust among the African recipients. In an effort to reassure all the Chinese institutional actors involved that indirect tactics can best serve the Chinese goal of defending and promoting its interests in Africa, Wang, Huang and Liu (2012) argue that by first focusing on technology and knowledge transfer China's desired cultural influence would in any case reach the recipient countries as a 'sideline effect'. Technical aid offered through volunteer work in Africa could in any case bolster Chinese *Weltanschauung* and spread it throughout the donor countries. A similar approach is adopted by other Chinese scholars (see for example Women de jianyi 2013).

The questions raised by the Chinese scholars do not only pertain to China's aid to Africa. As a rule, nation-states use international development aid as a major tool in the pursuit of their national self-interests. Under neo-liberalism national self-interests are primarily economic interests (Georgeou 2012, p. 186).

What preoccupies the Chinese scholars is the modest impact of the China Foreign Aid Youth Volunteers Program in the receiving countries. This emerges from a survey of African government officials attending a one-year training program, and a survey of African students, both conducted in Beijing in 2011. The surveys showed that African officials were not aware that the Chinese government sent volunteers, while both African officials and students mentioned volunteers from other countries – mainly the USA, Japan and the UK – as the international volunteers that had left them with the best impression. The students did not rank Chinese volunteers very highly.

While an in-depth assessment of whether Beijing is succeeding in its efforts to reaching out and winning the support of African people is beyond the scope of this article, the internal debate points at the meager performances of the Chinese volunteers in Africa and highlights the shortcomings of the Chinese effort to match the measures undertaken by other leading powers involved in Africa.

## 8 Domestic Volunteering: NGOs Coming Together with the State

To a certain extent, Chinese volunteering is modelled after Western non-profit services in that it incorporates the Western way of organization and professionalism in organizing voluntary work. However, as discussed above, the relatively recent growing prominence of voluntary service in China is a top-down initiative of the state (De Kloet, Pak Lei Chong, Landsberger 2011). Since the inception of the voluntary service in China, volunteering has been organized openly through government efforts (Zhang, Lin 2008b, p. 7). This top-down approach to volunteering has had, and still is having, some crucial implications for the implementation of volunteer programs.

At the domestic level, the issue of tight government control on volunteering, and its implications, had been addressed by Xiang and Yun in a 2006 article focusing on how volunteer resources can be maximized (on this issue see also Yang 2005).

In the early 2000s, in order to address the underdevelopment of rural education, the Western China University Graduate Volunteer Teaching Program was launched to encourage volunteer teaching in rural areas that suffered from scarce education resources. Xiang and Yun (2006) point out that only 55.6% of the volunteers applying to be teachers in Western China were assigned to schools, whereas 37.8% completed their services in administrative positions in various branches of the local government. In some cases, the local governments became places where volunteers were kept so that they could «leave safe and sound after two years, just like the way they came» (Zhang, Lin 2008b, p. 6). In their analysis of voluntary service in western China, Xiang and Yun point out that volunteering was initiated and dominated by the Chinese government and that although the government support guaranteed the implementation and continuation of the work on a large scale, the dominance of the government nevertheless weakened the initiatives of volunteers through political intervention and institutionalization (see also Zhang, Lin 2008a, pp. 5-8).

In their analysis of volunteering in China, Xiang and Yun hope that the future path of volunteer work «will be as a government-initiated but socially operated movement». They argue that «only in this fashion can [...] the unidirectional development of the volunteer work stemming from the fossilized policies and the clout of the hierarchical governments be precluded» (Xiang, Yun 2006, p. 1).

Thus, the pathway suggested by Chinese scholars for the reorganization of domestic volunteering consists in allowing a greater management role for social organizations as social bodies within which volunteering could prove to be more effective.

An overview of the growing role taken on over time by non-governmental organizations at the domestic level is beyond the scope of this article. We therefore limit ourselves to a broad-stroke description of the crucial steps taking place over time in the development of social organizations in China.

Within China, one crucial driver of the formation and rapid rise of volunteering and voluntary organizations has been the problematization of workplace based welfare and the development of a market-based economy. Over the years, a growing reliance on community volunteers and NGOs for service provision in China has emerged (Hoffman 2013). The year 1998 is considered a watershed in the use of 'non state resources' for social services: the Chinese government passed the Provisional Regulation on the Registration and Management of Civilian-run Non-enterprise Units, which established a system by which NGOs could become officially registered social organizations. These regulations require groups to have a sponsoring institution within the government.

Through the establishment of a registration and sponsoring system, the state has constructed the notion of what an NGO is, defined its scope of activity and limited its autonomy (Ma 2002, p. 305; Hildebrand 2013, p. 36, among others). In 2003 a directive clarified that the state's role would shift from direct provider to policy maker and regulator for social welfare (Wong, Tang 2006-2007).

The year 2008 is conventionally considered the beginning of the phase of Chinese civil society organizations' development, a phase in which welfare-oriented NGOs rapidly started networking and going into partnership with the state (Franceschini 2014). This shift, far from implying that NGOs are allowed to take on a positive role in democratization, only specifies the boundaries of the space for social organizations in China. Many scholars have highlighted the limitations to which social organizations are subject in China. Hasmath and Hsu (2014), among others, maintain that the regulatory environment for NGOs in China contributes to maintaining social stability by keeping out those organizations that the government perceives as a threat. Franceschini (2014, p. 6) points out that from 2008 on, rights-oriented NGOs encountered an increasingly repressive political environment. Hoffman (2013, p. 848) argues that the space for social organizations specified by policies and directives «is not about the release of the people to be who they really are, but rather, is a process by which volunteerism emerges *through* the governmental technology of autonomy and practices of decentralization». De Kloet, Pak Lei Chong and Landsberger (2011, p. 39) point out that «becoming a volunteer was never something entirely 'voluntary'».

Xiang's and Yun's article advocating a reduction in the direct involvement of the Chinese government in domestic volunteering was published in 2006, that is shortly before the above-mentioned shifts took place in the field of volunteering. Their article should be understood as heralding the

imminent acceleration in transforming NGOs into partners of the Chinese state, and a more mediated state control over some types of programs.

Thus, in actual fact, a nexus between a growing involvement of social organizations and a reduced direct government control on voluntary work as beneficial for attaining the effects expected by the Chinese leadership within the national boundaries had already been highlighted back in the mid 2000s.

## 9 A Similar Pathway for International Volunteering?

More recently, a similar critical approach towards tight governmental control has emerged over the issue of Chinese international volunteering.

Chinese international volunteering is still in its early phase. In fact, as shown above, it was only in 2002 that international volunteering started to feature in Beijing's global activism.

At the same time, until recently the Chinese government's support for Chinese NGOs engaged in Sino-African relations has been rather limited. As opposed to the situation of social volunteering at the domestic level, Chinese international voluntary service is still under direct government control. Brenner (2012) argues that to work on critical issues relevant to Sino-African relations is exceptional for a Chinese NGO. Besides, as shown above, China has established highly selective volunteer recruitment procedures for international volunteering, with some local announcements requiring that the applicants be members of the CCP or the CYL. This amounts to a requirement of ideological conformity to the nation-state discourse even stricter than that required from volunteers active in China.

According to some influential scholars, China's top-down approach and tight control over international volunteering are among the main reasons why China's people-to-people diplomacy is experiencing bottlenecks and even failures. In fact, excessive direct governmental control makes the bureaucratic aspects of the exchange prevalent over direct involvement with the local communities and thus reduces the impact of the voluntary service. As a rule Chinese volunteers in African countries live in urban areas and mostly work in offices in the capital and lack real life experience and exchanges with the local society (Wang et al. 2012). Other writings suggest that people-to-people interactions at the grassroots level should be intensified (Li, Luo 2013).

The critical stance of certain scholars also focuses on the existing peculiar arrangements in the international volunteers' recruitment and exchange. In contrast to international volunteers from other countries that participate in voluntary work through programs developed by international volunteer agencies, within the China Foreign Aid Youth Volunteers Program, Chinese volunteers are sent out through official channels. Chinese

government's volunteers go to African countries only upon the signing of an agreement between the governments of China and the receiving African country and after governmental institutions in both countries have agreed on the specific implementation of the volunteer program.

Scholars point out that voluntary work does not benefit from such arrangements. For instance, South Africa is not used to having the government organize such exchanges and therefore is less likely to accept government-run volunteer missions from China (Wang et al. 2012). To counter such a situation, scholars suggest that the Chinese government reduce its direct involvement and control over volunteer service and entrust social organizations with the management of volunteering.

In sum, six years after Xiang's and Yun's critical stance on the issue of domestic volunteering, Wang and his colleagues (2012) discuss the involvement of NGOs as a remedy to too tight a state grip on international volunteering. Thus, at different moments, both Chinese scholars focusing on domestic voluntary work in mid 2000s and those analysing international volunteering in early 2010s highlight bottlenecks and shortcomings originating from a top-down approach to volunteering and a tight control of its implementation. In both cases, a more direct involvement of social organizations is suggested.

## 10 Tapping into a Previously Overlooked Resource

Chinese scholars warn that more and more young Chinese access volunteering in Africa through non-Chinese international NGOs. In fact, parallel to government-controlled international volunteering, a new international volunteering process has started in recent years with Chinese youngsters now participating in international programs managed by non-Chinese NGOs and social organizations. According to Li and Luo (2014, p. 38) «non-governmental volunteerism in Africa took place earlier than that of governmental participation». The authors cite as an example of this trend the approximately one hundred Chinese students assigned to some locations in Africa by the Development Aid from People to People (DAPP), a NGO with its headquarters in Denmark. Other sources show that growing numbers of Chinese students are recruited by other non-Chinese NGOs. For instance, starting in 2010, after the approval of the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, Voluntary Service Overseas, a UK based organization, for the first time started recruiting volunteers from all over China to participate its global projects, with Africa as the main destination (China Development Brief 2011).

The China-Africa Project features an interview with Felicity Li, a Chinese student of Mathematics at Fudan University, Shanghai who in 2012

went to Ghana as a volunteer.<sup>13</sup> As many other Chinese students, Felicity has been enrolled in a volunteer program run by AIESEC, a non-profit organization founded in Europe in 1948 and now active in 126 countries. The student explains that she decided to join AIESEC program in Africa after she received a promotional e-mail from the organization that was recruiting exchange participants:

I got a promotional letter in my university e-mail inbox saying, «Do you want to have the chance to do volunteer work abroad? You can go to Africa». It really attracted me because I had always wanted to go to Africa, and it would have been more meaningful to me if it were to be volunteer work instead of just traveling. So I just applied for it and I got in. (Musakwa 2013)

Thus, successful non-Chinese volunteering programs are becoming more and more popular among Chinese youngsters while the government-managed international volunteering program is seen as unable to meet the expected goals. These different outcomes, together with an urgency to reap the benefits of the last decade's public diplomacy efforts push influential scholars to argue that volunteering conducted through NGOs could be more effective than voluntary service directly controlled by Chinese state agencies. Wang and his colleagues (2012) suggest that contacts with NGOs rooted in Africa working directly with the local communities be established and they go as far as suggesting that the Chinese government entrusts to NGOs the entire management of the Program - including the recruitment, training and dispatch of volunteers -, with the government limiting itself to supervision of the Program. This call to delegate to carefully selected NGOs most of the steps in the management of Chinese volunteer service abroad, however, does not imply that political loyalty to the state's ideology is lost. The rationale behind this policy suggestion is to both give a new impetus to people-to-people diplomacy in Africa and to tap into the previously overlooked resource of growing numbers of Chinese youngsters eager to undertake volunteering abroad.

Precisely because these are the goals that Chinese international volunteering should reach, influential scholars have been undertaking a major overhaul of the dominant discourse on who is entitled to transmit Chinese dominant values abroad. Wang and his colleagues (2012) argue that the mission of being messengers of the Chinese culture should by no means only fall within officially sent volunteers' prerogatives, and instead claim that volunteers sent by NGOs can also transmit the Chinese *Weltanschauung*

13 The China Africa Project is a multimedia resource dedicated to exploring different aspects of China's growing engagement with Africa.

to the communities where they work. Thus, they raise the issue of public diplomacy through international volunteering as a task that can be carried out also by ordinary people who are not recruited by government's agencies and whose political compliance is not directly controlled by Beijing. A new approach is therefore set against the assumption previously implicitly dominant in government bodies: that the Chinese mainstream world view as embodied in the cultural norms elaborated by those in power is internalized also by those Chinese over whom the government and the party have not secured a direct organisational and ideological grip.

In short, the article by Wang, Huang and Liu questions the prevailing double isomorphism according to which international voluntary service has to be coupled with full conformity to the official ideology, and that this conformity is only to be found in volunteers selected by government bodies or 'mass organizations' directly controlled by the Party.

## **11 Chinese Scholars as Heralds of Ongoing Shifts in International Volunteering**

The important shift advocated by the Chinese authors amounts to a process of popularization of the non-state modes of addressing crucial issues through the involvement of NGOs at the international level. However, far from implying that the state grants free rein to social organizations active at the international level, this approach intends NGOs to be tools to aid the pursuit of China's global strategic goals. This amounts to devising a policy for international aid similar to the policies adopted within China where, as shown above, non-governmental or social organizations have been given an instrumental role of aiding the pursuit of «socialism with Chinese characteristics» (Lee 2009, p. 354) and where NGOs joining with the state in service provision had been promoted and implemented.

The new approach suggested by scholarly articles is clearly interwoven with the Chinese government's changing strategy towards Africa.

Back in 2009, in the closing communiqué of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Chinese government had already stated its intention to promote NGO's involvement in Sino-African relations (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation 2009). By 2012, NGOs mass engagement in voluntary work in Africa had become one of the components of a more comprehensive new set of policies aimed at strengthening people-to-people contacts and calling for greater interactions between non-official Chinese and African actors, also including exchanges between universities and think tanks, educational and training initiatives for Africans in China, and China-Africa media cooperation in a media environment historically dominated by the West (FOCAC 2012; Hanauer, Morris 2014). Cultural and People-to-People

Exchanges and Cooperation is one of the new sections of what President Hu Jintao (2012) at the 2012 FOCAC referred to as a «new type of China-Africa strategic partnership» also including issues such as health aid, sustainability and security.

With this new approach, the China-Africa People's Forum was launched in 2011 to enhance exchanges between African and Chinese NGOs. The Second China-Africa People's Forum became one associate event officially incorporated into the 2012 FOCAC. In that occasion it was argued that NGOs should play a critical role in China-Africa relations «if the growing economic ties between China and Africa were to be steered towards addressing the critical needs of grassroots Africa» (NGOs in Africa 2012).

In 2012 the role of NGOs in Sino-African ties started featuring in the African press. According to one article, interestingly entitled «Africa: NGOs Advocate Balance in Sino-African Ties» (2012), many of the African participants in the China-Africa People Forum in 2012 asked whether China activism in Africa could soon «be steered towards addressing the critical needs of grassroots Africa and ensure that Africans get real value for money in the support it is receiving from China to develop its economies».

In 2012 and 2013, other articles, also published in *Dangdai shijie*, echoed the critical assessment of the implementation of existing international volunteering policy and advocated a shift in the leadership's approach (Huang et al. 2013a, Women de jianyi, 2013).

Within China's new soft power approach to Africa, Chinese scholars' plea that NGOs and ordinary Chinese people can also be activists in people-to-people diplomacy is more easily understood. By acknowledging that people-to-people interactions are an important and underutilized mechanism that can complement government-to-government exchanges, in fact, Beijing makes room for an enhanced role for both Chinese international volunteers and NGOs within which growing numbers of ordinary citizens could access voluntary service in Africa. Such an arrangement offers competitive advantages if compared with the previous voluntary work provided through more official channels. In fact, at least in principle, NGOs can both cover issues now ranking high on the China-Africa agenda such as health aid and sustainability and at the same time provide the context where people-to-people diplomacy can be easily carried out. As a result, China's people-to-people diplomacy in Africa could be more effective and more visible.

With this new strategic approach, new perspectives and an enormous space for Chinese NGOs action abroad has started taking shape.



## 12 First Steps Along the New Pathway?

Going to Africa is now recognized as the first step for Chinese NGOs to go abroad (Meng, Sun 2013). While there are no official statistics on the number of Chinese NGOs active in Africa, He (2013) points out that «at the end of 2013, fewer than ten NGOs from the Chinese mainland have expanded abroad». According to other estimates, there are more than 100 Chinese NGOs operating in Africa, ten of which have permanent operations and local offices in Africa (Liu 2013).

By 2013, Liu Hongwu, dean of the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University, could claim that increased grassroots engagement of Chinese NGOs in Africa was already giving «a new dimension and perspective to what Africa and the rest of the world thinks about China» (Liu 2013).<sup>14</sup>

However, it is mainly government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) that have the capacity to expand their operations beyond China (Brenner 2012).<sup>15</sup> In fact, the most mentioned Chinese organizations active in Africa are well-known GONGOs such as the Red Cross Society of China, the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviations, and the Chinese Youth Development Foundation (Meng, Sun 2013). According to pioneer research, a two-track process is emerging, with GONGOS engaging in large-scale development projects and smaller NGOs focusing on projects where they have proven expertise (Brenner 2012).<sup>16</sup> This is a still mostly untapped field of research, where fieldwork is needed.

While in the framework of the 2012's FOCAC Beijing's policy makers have earnestly sought a new approach to international voluntary service, it is still unclear how and to what extent the procedures of sending Chinese volunteers to Africa have actually changed. There is no evidence of a drastic departure from previous decision-making procedures, just as

<sup>14</sup> Together with Shen Beili, Liu Hongwu is the editor of the 2009 book *Feizhou fei zhengfu zuzhi yu zhongfei guanxi* (The African NGOs and Sino-African Relations). According to MqVU (2010), the book is intended as a reference for Chinese policy-makers. In the book it is argued that African NGOs have a negative influence on China-Africa relations and that they might weaken China's soft power and erode the basis of China-Africa cooperation. The authors recommend that the Chinese government reach out to African NGOs and suggest that selected NGOs should be invited to carry out inspections of the management of Chinese companies in Africa.

<sup>15</sup> Unlike NGOs, GONGOs are established by a government institution and are only quasi non-governmental. GONGOs fulfil roles within Chinese policy-making and policy implementation that cannot be performed by the state itself. However, some GONGOs, after gaining extensive professional networks to international NGOs and donors, have become integral stakeholders able to influence policy and legislation. For an overview of Chinese NGOs and GONGOs in Sino-African relations see Brenner 2012.

<sup>16</sup> These are also the findings of *From Domestic to International: The Evolution of Chinese NGO*, ongoing research presented by Jennifer Hsu at the AAS Annual Conference (2014).

there is no evidence that recruitment and management of volunteers is now mainly being trusted to Chinese NGOs.

As discussed above, the government-controlled recruiting channel has not been abolished. The article «Chinese Young Volunteers Head for Africa» (2014) shows that the Youth League is still recruiting volunteers: a group of 12 young volunteers selected by the Youth League and the Chinese Young Volunteers Association was sent to Ethiopia in August 2014.

This thus seems to be a transition period, with the Chinese government envisaging the merging of the government-to-government mode of international volunteer aid with NGO-managed international volunteering (see for instance Elinaza 2014). Precisely because it is a transition period, other modes of exploiting the potential for volunteering in Africa are tentatively envisaged. For instance, Liu in 2013 (p. 7) stated that «hundreds of teachers are also in Africa teaching Chinese. These overseas students and language teachers have a good knowledge of the local community and some are willing to work and live in Africa on a long-term basis. They are a crucial driving force for Chinese NGOs in Africa». While this approach shows that there is not a clear distinction between volunteers and language teachers sent within specific programs such as the Confucius Institute, it is possible that China intends to tap into the resource of people who have already spent some time in Africa and to offer them the position of long-term volunteers working for those Chinese NGOs that have started operating in African countries.<sup>17</sup>

That China's international volunteering is now undergoing a transition period where alternative approaches are taken into consideration, also emerges from the different stances taken by outstanding personalities on the issue of control over Chinese NGOs active in Africa. In 2012, speaking of cooperation between African and Chinese NGOs, Zhu Ming, of the Shanghai Institute for International Studies stated: «Frankly speaking, the non-state actors of Africa and China are still not strong enough to carry out effective mutual cooperation. There is still a long road ahead» (Zhu 2012, p. 23). One year later, Liu Hongwu (2013, p. 7) warned that a more grassroots approach, while needed, is conducive to a diversification of the interests and objectives of Chinese NGOs in Africa and that this in turn could collide with China's national strategy in Africa. He argued that the «new challenge will be how to guide these NGOs to prevent such a collision».

Thus, a tension remains among Chinese policy-makers and intellectuals between the push to strengthen the internationalization of domestic NGOs on the one hand, and on the other hand fears of state control being lost once the firm grip is relaxed. The existing tension shows that the Chinese

17 Confucius institutes have recently come under significant critique worldwide (Leung, Du Cros 2014, Scarpari 2015).

government is facing, and trying to somehow reconcile, «the contradictions of participation and control» (Germani 1970, quoted in Yan 2014, p. 18). This is the very same contradiction being faced by the Chinese leadership with NGOs at the domestic level (on this contradiction within China see Yan 2014). Once again, then, dilemmas that had emerged in the national arena in China present themselves again when China tries to reassess its international volunteer policy and the modes of its implementation. Fieldwork research could verify which patterns and mechanisms will prevail in China's international volunteering in Africa.

### 13 Implications of the New Role for NGOs in China's International Volunteer Strategies

The interaction between the state and NGOs has become a salient subject of interest in the last years.

A growing number of scholars focusing on NGOs active in China point out that social organizations should not necessarily be considered a progressive force for political change. Focusing on labour NGOs, Franceschini (2014) challenges the idea of NGOs as grassroots organizations through which Chinese people take part in public affairs and collectively form a more participatory citizenship. Rather, scholars increasingly point out that not only the central state is actively involved in the development of NGOs but also, increasingly, the successes of NGOs are determined by their interactions with the state (Hsu, Hasmath 2014). Thus, most NGOs are, in essence, a bridge between state and society (Ma 2002): they work for the Party-state to which they adhere, minimize social conflict, improve the government's image in the eyes of the general public (Hildebrand 2013, p. 167) and thus increase the legitimacy of the state and help the Party to maintain its power. In particular, government organized NGOs (GONGOs) and mass organizations are regarded as the social arm of the Party-state, «given that the state has actively created these institutions to ensure a bridge between state and society» (Hsu, Hasmath 2014).

Against such a background, the direct involvement of Chinese social organizations in international volunteering is to be intended as modelled on the state-NGOs relational mode existing within China. This emerges clearly from the scholarly writings analysed in this article. Far from promoting a retreat of the state from international development volunteering, the academics urge to promote a new mode of governance is still in relation to the state apparatus. They suggest that this step should be intended as «going to sea by borrowing a boat» (*jie chuan chu hai*). This is a fashionable slogan in China, used to describe tactics aimed at taking advantage of other countries' facilities. Quoting a 2006 confidential report by the European

Studies Team, Liu (2008) points out that this was the slogan adopted by the Confucius Institutes in Europe for describing the cooperative model consisting in taking advantage of other countries' campuses and management. This was considered the best choice for the Chinese government as it could spend the least money and gain the most influence.

The shift away from previous international volunteering policies and modes of policy implementation and the drive towards a stronger involvement of NGOs in volunteering both at the domestic and the international level clearly originate from the Chinese leadership. For instance, it was the Central Committee of the CYL who launched and managed the Western China University Graduate Volunteer Teaching Program in the 2000s (Xiang, Yun 2006), and it was the CYL of Heilongjiang University that provided financial support for Xiang's and Yun's research and article highlighting shortcomings in volunteer participation in that program and suggesting a more direct involvement by social organizations. By the same token, Wang's and his colleagues' (2012) plea for moving away from the existing Chinese policy on volunteering and its modes of implementation and making room for the participation of NGOs in China's international volunteer initiatives, as well as other articles directly or indirectly supporting this shift, has appeared in a CCP-sponsored journal.

Focusing on Chinese NGOs active in China, Hsu and Hasmath argue that the Chinese state has now adopted a strategy «of tacit sanctioning whereby the state creates and mediates the 'space' in which NGOs can operate» (Hasmath, Hsu 2014, p. 936).

Lisa Hoffman (2013), drawing on Foucault, considers the emergency of volunteering in Chinese cities and the practices of 'local autonomy' as technologies for governing the urban space.<sup>18</sup>

Building on these conceptualizations, a tentative conclusion can be put forward: that the practices of enhancing the role of non-governmental agencies in Chinese international voluntary service far from implying less state governance should be considered as technologies for governing development volunteering in the way that best serves Chinese economic interests and soft power strategies. Chinese international volunteers included in selected NGOs aid programs are being activated to step into spaces previously dominantly occupied by the centrally organized provision of development aid because they can more easily give shape to the Chinese government policy of reinforcement of people-to-people diplomacy. This conclusion requires further research in order to unpack the various elements that make up the new modes through which China governs international voluntary service.

18 Foucault (2000) contends that neoliberal governmentability is not about the retreat of the State; rather it is a restructuring of power relations in society.

## 14 Conclusions

Beijing is carefully tending its international image.

Scholars increasingly agree that aid represents the main tool of China's soft power strategy in Africa. The Chinese leadership pays particular attention to use aid as a tool of diplomacy and an instrument to meet political, strategic, and economic goals (Brautigam 2008, pp. 201-202). Nonetheless, recent research shows that domestic politics also plays a critical role in shaping China's aid to Africa and affects its effectiveness (see Huang 2014).

The Chinese engagement in international aid through volunteering is a recent development and is still very limited in scope. However, the lively internal debate on shortcomings and future perspectives for Chinese international voluntary service shows that this is one of the fields playing and bound to play an ever more crucial role within China's soft power strategy towards Africa.

By documenting and analysing the growing significance China attaches to youth volunteering, this article argues that international volunteer programs emerged under the initiative of the government as an integral part of the PRC foreign diplomacy aimed at enhancing China's public appeal abroad (especially in Africa). It contends that the Youth Volunteer Overseas Service Program in many respects represents an expansion of the system, policies and approaches that have been at work at the domestic level. Recently, international volunteering has been the object of an internal debate that sheds light on dilemmas and blind spots of the Chinese voluntary service in Africa, and on the choices currently being made by Beijing.

What emerges from the vast literature on Chinese NGOs active in China is that, also as a remedy to policy failures (Hsu 2014), a process of popularization of non-state modes of addressing crucial domestic issues has developed through bringing together the state and social organizations and the growing involvement of volunteers in social work.

It is argued here that similar conditions and needs at the international level are now opening up a similar pathway of state-NGOs relations at the international level: as much as policy failures and the partial withdrawal of the state from the provision of some services have heavily contributed to create, within the national borders, the space in which selected NGOs could operate, policy failure in the international volunteering program has more recently created the conditions for the emergence of a space and subjects for a non-state mode of implementation in international volunteering. Selected Chinese GONGOs and NGOs are now being activated to occupy this space. Thus, far from prefiguring a retreat of the state in favour of grass-root organizations, this shift is intended as the best way to implement Chinese government soft power strategy in Africa.

Further, the paper shows that influential Chinese intellectuals have acted as catalysts of the drive to change the international volunteer service

policy and its modes of implementation, and as heralds of the crucial shifts in volunteering both at the domestic and international levels.

Chinese NGOs are now perceived as vital to the efficacy and successful implementation of the central state's policies in pursuit of effective public diplomacy that enhances Chinese soft power reach. NGOs can in fact help reaching local communities in the recipient countries and this can, according to the Chinese analysts, enhance the impact of volunteer action and more easily bring about the attainment of Chinese goals.

The tension between control and participation in the ongoing debate on international volunteer initiatives highlights the existing challenges to the Chinese state's capability to maintain a coherence among, and direct the multitude of Chinese actors engaging in international volunteer initiatives.<sup>19</sup>

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19 On the Chinese state's centralized control as imagery and symbolism directed towards Africa, towards the world, and towards the Chinese population see Taylor 2012.

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## Conservative and Innovative Features in the Phonology of the Hateruma Dialect

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**Abstract** The Hateruma dialect belongs to Yaeyama Ryukyuan and is spoken on the Hateruma island as well as in the Shiraho village of Ishigaki island. The aim of this paper is to describe and analyse the phonetic and phonological characteristics of the Hateruma dialect, in order to point out all the uncommon features, most of which are unique within both Ryukyuan and mainland varieties, and their implication in the reconstruction of proto-Japanese. Beside several innovative forms, like the pharyngealized vowel, sonorant devoicing and noun-final consonant epenthesis, the Hateruma dialect is conservative in preserving certain distinctions which reflect better than any other Ryukyuan variety the distinction of *kō/otsu* series of Old Japanese and the corresponding reconstructed forms of proto-Japanese. A comparative analysis between cognates of the Hateruma dialect and Old Japanese shows how innovative sound changes may have contributed to preserve the distinction between syllables which have merged elsewhere.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Hateruma Dialect: Geographic Distribution. – 3 Vowel System. – 4 Sonorant Devoicing. – 5 Noun-final Consonant Epenthesis. – 6 The Hateruma Reflexes of Proto-Japanese \*kai, \*kui and \*ki. – 7 Conclusions.

**Keywords** Yaeyama Ryukyuan. The Hateruma dialect. Old Japanese *kō-rui* and *otsu-rui* syllables. Phonetic and phonological change. Proto-Japanese.

### 1 Introduction

The aim of this paper<sup>1</sup> is to examine selected aspects of the phonetic and phonological structure of the Hateruma dialect, in order to point out all the uncommon features, most of which are unique within both Ryukyuan and mainland varieties, and their implication in the reconstruction of proto-Japanese. It is well known among ryukyuanists that the phonological system of the Hateruma dialect exhibits several innovations due to phonological changes which have not occurred in other Ryukyuan varieties. Compared

1 This paper has been presented at the international conference of the European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJS), held at University of Ljubljana in Slovenia in 2014, August 27-30. I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable and insightful comments that helped me improve this paper.



with the other related varieties of Yaeyama subgroup, the Hateruma dialect has undergone relatively larger changes, which have contributed in lowering its degree of mutual intelligibility within the subgroup. However, the Hateruma dialect can be considered innovative in one respect, while simultaneously conservative in another. Phonological changes in the Hateruma dialect have allowed the preservation of the distinction of certain syllables which reflect better than any other Ryukyuan variety the distinction of *kō/otsu* syllables of Old Japanese,<sup>2</sup> and the corresponding reconstructed forms of proto-Japanese.<sup>3</sup> In the first part of the paper, I will describe and analyse the innovative phonetic and phonological characteristics both in the vowel and in the consonant systems. Afterwards, making a comparison with Old Japanese, I will show certain aspects which suggest that the Hateruma dialect can also be considered a conservative variety.

## 2 The Hateruma Dialect: Geographic Distribution

The Hateruma dialect belongs to what has been classified by UNESCO under the name of Yaeyama, one of the six endangered languages, together with Amami, Kunigami, Okinawa, Miyako and Yonaguni, spoken in the Ryukyuan archipelago (Heinrich 2015). According to UNESCO, Yaeyama is the endangered language spoken on Yaeyama archipelago, to which the Hateruma island belongs. However, the varieties spoken throughout the small archipelago are quite different from each other and their mutual intelligibility is not always guaranteed (Aso 2015). The Hateruma dialect is mainly spoken on the Hateruma island, the southernmost island of the Ryukyuan archipelago and also the southernmost place where a Japonic variety is spoken. The Hateruma island has a population of about 546 inhabitants, of which just a part<sup>4</sup> can still speak the Hateruma dialect. During a fieldwork on the island in 2008, I observed that only elderly people are still fluent in the Hateruma dialect. Younger generation is monolingual in standard Japanese. The Hateruma inhabitants use the term *besiŋma* 'my island' to indicate the Hateruma island and the term *besiŋma nu ŋutuba* 'the language of my island' to indicate the variety of the Hateruma.

The Hateruma dialect is not spoken solely on the Hateruma island. It is also spoken in the village of Shiraho in Ishigaki island. The village of

2 Old Japanese syllable distinctions are indicated here with the traditional expressions *kō-rui* and *otsu-rui* or with subscript numbers <sub>1</sub> (*kō-rui*) and <sub>2</sub> (*otsu-rui*).

3 The proto-Japanese reconstructions used here are cited from Hattori (1978-1979). This reconstruction has also been recently supported by new Ryukyuan data (Pellard 2013).

4 The Hateruma dialect is primarily spoken by people over the age of 70 (personal field notes, Aso 2015).

Shiraho was founded in 1713 by 300 migrants from the Hateruma island. But it was then destroyed by the Meiji Tsunami of 1771 and all 1574 inhabitants perished in the disaster. Shiraho was rebuilt by 413 people who forcibly migrated from the Hateruma island following a policy of the Ryūkyū kingdom government (Karimata 2008, p. 2). Therefore, we can say that the Hateruma dialect has two diatopic varieties: the Hateruma variety spoken on the Hateruma island, and the Shiraho variety spoken in the village of Shiraho. Between the two varieties there are no particular differences in the basic vocabulary and grammar. The main differences can be observed in the phonological system.

### 3 Vowel System

The Hateruma dialect is highly innovative in its vowel phonology. It is the only variety of Yaeyama subgroup to have a system of seven vowel phonemes. The other Yaeyama varieties have systems of six or five vowels. The pharyngealized vowel [eʰ] is a peculiar vowel and is not found in any other Ryukyuan varieties (Table 1).

Table 1. The 7-vowel system of the Hateruma dialect

i		ɨ		u
	e	eʰ		o
		a		

As in all Ryukyuan subgroups, proto-Yaeyama has experienced the raising of proto-Ryukyuan mid vowels \*e and \*o to high vowels *i* and *u*. Proto-Ryukyuan \*i has changed into the central high vowel *ɨ* in proto-Yaeyama. In the Hateruma dialect it is still realized as a central high vowel, but in other dialects of Yaeyama subgroup such as Taketomi, Kuroshima, Iriomote and Hatoma, this vowel has changed into the front high vowel *i*. Due to the mid-vowel raising the proto-Ryukyuan mid back vowel \*o has changed into *u* in all Ryukyuan varieties. Nevertheless, in the Hateruma dialect there are several words where an unexpected mid vowel *o* appears.<sup>5</sup> It is

<sup>5</sup> Examples of an unexpected mid vowel *o* in the Hateruma dialect are: p̄aṭon (<\*pato<sub>1</sub>) 'pigeon'; φ̄ȳm̄on (<\*kumo<sub>1</sub>) 'cloud'; ʃ̄j̄no (<\*tuno<sub>1</sub>) 'horn'; mizori (<\*mizo<sub>2</sub>) 'ditch' (personal field notes, Nakama 1992). All the other varieties of the Yaeyama subgroup have the vowel *u* in this position. Surprisingly, cognates of the Shiba variety of Kakeroma island (Amami subgroup) have the vowel *o* in the same positions: hato: (<\*pato<sub>1</sub>) 'pigeon'; kumo: (<\*kumo<sub>1</sub>) 'cloud'; tino: (<\*tuno<sub>1</sub>) 'horn'; mid̄ʒo: (<\*mizo<sub>2</sub>) 'ditch' (personal field notes, Sibata 1979).

not still clear though whether it is the result of a further sound change or it is the reflex of an unchanged proto-Ryukyuan \*o.

As we can see in Table 2, the presence of two mid front vowels in the Hateruma dialect is the result of the coalescence of the proto-Yaeyama diphthongs \*ai and \*ai.

Table 2. Hateruma and proto-Yaeyama reflexes of the proto-Ryukyuan vowels and diphthongs

Proto-Ryukyuan	Proto-Yaeyama	Hateruma
*i	*i	i
*e	*i	i
*o	*u	u/o
*ae	*ai	e
*ai	*ai	e <sup>r</sup>

The peculiar vowel of the Hateruma dialect, hitherto transcribed as a pharyngealized front mid vowel [e<sup>r</sup>], is attested morpheme-internally and in morphologically derived environments. Table 3 illustrates interesting minimal pairs that prove the phonemic opposition of the two vowels. As I observed during a fieldwork in 2008, only the variety of the old generation of speakers of the Hateruma island preserves the phonemic opposition of these vowel phonemes.<sup>6</sup> In the variety of young generation of speakers of the Hateruma island as well as in the varieties of both generations of Shiraho village, the opposition is lost and the pharyngealized vowel is realized as a plain front mid vowel.

Table 3. Minimal pairs in the Hateruma

[pe <sup>r</sup> :] 'hoe'	[ke <sup>r</sup> :] 'egg'	[me <sup>r</sup> :] 'rice'
[pe:] 'fly'	[ke:] 'shade'	[me:] 'in front'

In previous studies on the Hateruma dialect we can find different descriptions of the phonetic realization of this vowel. It has been first described as a front open-mid vowel [ɛ] by Miyanaga Masamori in his *Yaeyama goi* (1930). Miyanaga argued that the difference between the two vowel sounds

6 The data of the Hateruma dialect used in this paper were collected during my own fieldwork on the island of the Hateruma in 2008. The informant of the old generation of speakers was 84 at the moment of recording (born in 1924). The informant of the young generation of speakers was 58 at the moment of recording (born in 1950). As the variety of the young generation of speakers exhibits several differences in the vowel phonology (for more details see Pappalardo 2012), the data used in this paper come solely from the informant of the old generation of speakers.

was one of height. In Nakamoto (1976) as well as in Hirayama (1988) the symbol used to transcribe this vowel was that of a centralized vowel [ɛ̈]. According to Nakamoto and Hirayama the difference between the two vowels was one of backness rather than height. Uemura (1992) unifies the two hypotheses and proposes for the transcription of the vowel the symbol of a central mid-open vowel [ɜ], which differs from the front mid-close vowel in height and backness. Again, in 1997, Uemura provides a further description of the vowel and transcribes it as an apical central mid-open vowel [ɜ̟].<sup>7</sup> Karimata (2008) uses the symbol of front mid-open vowel [ɛ] already used by Miyanaga (1930). Confronted with these different phonetic descriptions, one can wonder whether the difference between the two mid vowels is one of height or backness. As all these phonetic descriptions are interpreted by the human ear, in 2012 a phonetic analysis through the instruments of acoustic phonetics was carried out. As a result, the peculiar vowel of the Hateruma dialect has been described as a pharyngealized front mid-close vowel [e̠] (Pappalardo 2012).

Observing the spectrogram of a minimal pair (Fig. 1), we can notice that the trait that guarantees the phonemic opposition between the two vowels is neither the backness nor the height.

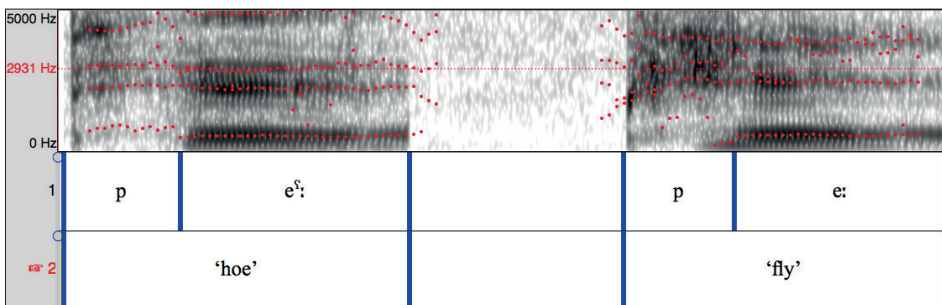


Figure 1. Spectrogram of the minimal pair [pe̠:] 'hoe' / [pe:] 'fly' uttered by an informant of the old generation of speakers

As we can see, there are no significant differences in the height of the first and the second formants. What is crucial in this opposition is the third formant. The first of the two vowels has a quite low third formant. According to the perturbation theory (Chiba, Kajiyama 1942), it means that there is a constriction at one of the three velocity nodes, which for the third formant are located at lips, hard palate and pharynx. As no labial

<sup>7</sup> The symbol used by Uemura (1997) for the transcription of the vowel is not an IPA symbol. For convenience it has been converted here to an IPA symbol.

rounding or raising of the tongue has been observed, it has been possible to hypothesize that the constriction was located at the pharynx, and that the vowel was a pharyngealized front mid-open vowel [eʰ].

### 4 Sonorant Devoicing

One of the most striking features in the Hateruma dialect is undoubtedly the particular strong aspiration in word-initial voiceless obstruent, which devoices both the following vowel and the subsequent nasal or liquid. However, no devoicing is attested when the word is monosyllabic. Other Yaeyama varieties have a similar phenomenon, but according to Uemura (1992) the Hateruma dialect has the strongest aspiration and is the only variety in which there is a nasal and liquid devoicing (Table 4).

Table 4. Sonorant devoicing in the Hateruma

	CVCV	Gloss
	[sɨŋu]	'heart'
	[φʊŋi]	'boat'
	[pəŋa]	'beach'
	[pəŋi]	'wing'
	[pɨŋu]	'garlic'
	[səŋu]	'monkey'
	[pəŋi]	'needle'
	[tʊŋi]	'bird'
	[kəŋi]	'turtle'

In the spectrogram of the word *kəŋi* 'turtle' (Fig. 2), the devoicing portion (i.e. [am]) lacks a voice-bar while the following portion (i.e. [mi]) has it. The nasal consonant *m* is only partially devoiced: at least 80% of the nasal is devoiced while the last part is voiced because of the presence of the sequent vowel. Devoicing is extensive in the variety of old generation of speakers, while young generation of speakers tends not to devoice the subsequent nasal or liquid. Some young speakers do not completely devoice even the first vowel. This means that devoicing here is a phenomenon that involves complete disappearance of the vocalic segment just at the surface level.

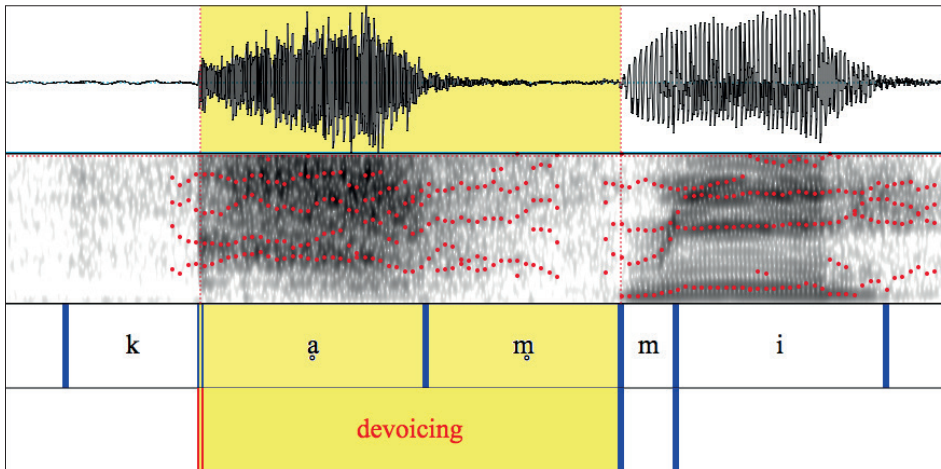


Figure 2. Spectrogram of the word [kə̞m̚i] ‘turtle’ uttered by an informant of the old generation of speakers

### 5 Noun-final Consonant Epenthesis

As for the consonant system, the noun-final mora nasal of the Hateruma dialect has been object of study and interest by several scholars throughout the world. The Hateruma dialect seems to be the only Japonic variety to preserve a conspicuous number of lexical items with this final nasal (Table 5). A similar noun-final nasal has been attested only for the Yonaguni dialect, but to a much lesser extent. What is interesting in this consonant is that it is unattested in any other Japonic variety.

Table 5. Noun-final mora nasal in the Hateruma

Gloss	Proto-Japanese	Hateruma
‘moon’	*tukui	ɕikiN
‘last year’	*koko	kuʔsiN
‘pigeon’	*pato	paʔon
‘cloud’	*kumo	ʔumon
‘tooth’	*pa	paN
‘root’	*ne	niN
‘fart’	*pe	piN
‘greens’	*na	naN
‘edge’	*pa	paN
‘eye’	*me	miN

Scholars such as Murayama (1981) and Starostin (1991) hypothesized that it is the relic of a nasal sound existing in proto-Japanese and reconstructed proto-Japanese forms with a noun-final nasal on the basis of the Hateruma dialect evidence. By positing a final nasal for these lexical items, they speculated that proto-Japanese might have relations with Austronesian languages. Needless to say, these kind of hypotheses are far from being persuasive. It is hard to be convinced that this final nasal survived only in the southernmost island of Japonic linguistic area. The theory of Oyler (1997) and Bentley (2008), who argued that this final nasal is the result of an innovation confined to the Hateruma and partly to the Yonaguni, is undoubtedly much more plausible. Karimata (2008, pp. 84-85) pointed out that certain lexical items have a noun-final nasal only in the Hateruma or in the Shiraho variety. On the basis of this irregular distribution, he hypothesized that the noun-final nasal is an epenthetic consonant which is the result of a parallel linguistic change occurred in both varieties after their split. However, it seems impossible to show for this phenomenon a clear, phonetically motivated, regular sound change. Among the potential sources of this phonetically unnatural sound change, analogy seems to fit best in this case.

In the Hateruma dialect, as well as in other varieties of the Yaeyama subgroup, the regular sound change of the syllable \*mi in word-final position, which changes into a final uvular nasal, is attested. Table 6 illustrates some historical sequences of such a regular sound change.

Table 6. Hateruma reflexes of proto-Ryukyuan \*mi

Gloss	*mi#	>	*mi#	>	N#
deity	*kami	>	*kamĩ	>	kaN
net	*ami	>	*amĩ	>	aN
chisel	*nomi	>	*numĩ	>	nun
flea	*nomi	>	*numĩ	>	nun
wave	*nami	>	*namĩ	>	naN
mirror	*kagami	>	*kangamĩ	>	kaŋgaN
scissors	*pasami	>	*pãtsamĩ	>	pãtsaN

As we have not found any plausible phonetic explanation for the phenomenon of epenthesis shown above, we may suppose that for some reason it bears a relation with the sound change of the syllable \*mi in word-final position. Even though many linguists may oppose the hypothesis of an analogical change, it seems to be a less controversial answer for sound changes conditioned by non-phonetic factors. Furthermore, this explanation seems to be much more persuasive than positing a noun-final nasal consonant in proto-Japanese.

## 6 The Hateruma Reflexes of Proto-Japanese \*kəi, \*kui and \*ki

Let's now consider some consonant sound changes occurred in the Hateruma dialect. Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the reflexes of proto-Ryukyuan \*p and \*k. The Hateruma dialect is conservative in retaining in most of the cases the voiceless bilabial stop of proto-Japanese and proto-Ryukyuan. It is well known that in all the varieties of mainland Japan the voiceless bilabial stop has undergone spirantization, changing into fricative consonants. The Hateruma dialect has undergone spirantization only before the vowel \*u of proto-Ryukyuan. Looking at Table 8, we notice that also the consonant \*k spirantizes in many cases.

Table 7. Reflexes of pR \*p

pR	Hateruma
*pa	pə
*pi	pɨ
*pu	ɸu
*pe	pi
*po	pu

Table 8. Reflexes of pR \*k

pR	Hateruma
*ka	ka/ha
*ki	si/ki
*ku	ɸu
*ke	ki
*ko	ku

I would like to focus now on the Hateruma reflexes of proto-Ryukyuan \*ki. As we can see on Table 8, the voiceless velar stop changes into an alveolar fricative in some cases. This is very interesting, because apart from some examples in the Taketomi dialect, the Hateruma dialect is the only variety in Ryukyuan archipelago to have two reflexes of proto-Ryukyuan \*ki. In fact, proto-Ryukyuan \*ki is the merged reflex of proto-Japanese \*ki and \*kui (Pellard 2013, p. 87). Has this a relation with the two reflexes in the Hateruma dialect? To further elaborate on this topic, we should consider the landmark study by Hattori Shirō (1932, 1978-1979) in which he reconstructed three distinct proto-forms corresponding to the modern Japanese syllable *ki*.

In Table 9 we can see some lexical items in the Shuri dialect, containing a syllable corresponding to Old Japanese *kō-rui* \*ki and *otsu-rui* \*ki. To Old Japanese *kō-rui* \*ki corresponds the syllable *tʃi* in the Shuri dialect, while to *otsu-rui* \*ki correspond both the syllable *ki* and the syllable *tʃi*. In other words, two distinct syllables correspond to Old Japanese *otsu-rui* \*ki. *Otsu-rui* \*ki is the merged reflex of two syllables of proto-Japanese, which can be also reconstructed through internal reconstruction observing the morphophonemic alternations occurring in Old Japanese.<sup>8</sup> The Shuri dia-

8 From morphophonemic alternations occurring in Old Japanese it is possible to reconstruct two different proto-Japanese sources of *otsu-rui* \*ki: \*kui, for Old Japanese cases where *otsu-rui* \*ki alternates with \*ku (e.g. *tuki*<sub>2</sub> 'moon' ~ *tuku-yo*<sub>1</sub> 'moonlight'); \*kəi, for



lect preserves a distinction already lost in Japanese in the eight century. Hattori first described this phenomenon<sup>9</sup> and posited three sources for Old Japanese *kō-ruī* and *otsu-ruī* \*ki.

Table 9. OJ *ki*<sub>1</sub> and *ki*<sub>2</sub> in the Shuri dialect

OJ <i>ki</i> <sub>1</sub> ( <i>kō-ruī</i> )		OJ <i>ki</i> <sub>2</sub> ( <i>otsu-ruī</i> )	
衣 'dress'	tʃiŋ	木 'tree'	ki:
肝 'liver'	tʃimu	起きる 'get up'	ʔukijun
聞く 'hear'	tʃiʃtʃun	月 'moon'	tsʃitʃi
息 'breath'	ʔi:tʃi	霧 'fog'	tʃiri
切る 'cut'	tʃi:juŋ	茎 'stem'	guʃi

By positing three distinct proto-forms it is possible to reconstruct a chain of phonetically motivated sound changes both for Old Japanese and the Shuri dialect. Proto-Japanese \*kəi and \*kui have merged into a syllable with a non-palatalized consonant in Old Japanese: *otsu-ruī* ki. In the Shuri dialect proto-Japanese \*kui and \*ki have merged into tʃi, which is the final step of a palatalization process (Table 10). Hattori made a thorough analysis of several Ryukyuan varieties using second-hand materials, and demonstrated that all the varieties observed share the merger pattern of the Shuri dialect. However, the lexical data he used for the Hateruma dialect were not fully reliable. I have found some evident mistakes in the transcription of lexical items that Hattori used for his investigation.<sup>10</sup>

Old Japanese cases where *otsu-ruī* \*ki alternates with *otsu-ruī* \*ko (e.g. *ki*<sub>2</sub> 'tree' ~ *ko*<sub>2</sub>-*dati* 'stand for trees').

9 Arisaka (1934) first noticed the phenomenon in a paper written before Hattori's (1932) but published two years later. Hattori acknowledged it was Arisaka's discovery (Pellard 2013).

10 Hattori (1978-1979, 19, p. 110) tries to verify whether the pattern of distinctions observed in the Shuri dialect is supported by the data of the other Ryukyuan varieties. For this purpose, he uses the second-hand data coming from Nakamoto (1976), and compares the reflexes of proto-Japanese \*ki, \*kui, \*kəi and \*kai in twenty varieties of all Ryukyuan subgroups, included the Hateruma dialect. The lexical items used for this comparison are the cognates of proto-Japanese \*kinu 'dress', \*kui 'fog', \*kəi 'tree' and \*kai 'hair'. For the Hateruma dialect we have respectively sɪnu 'dress', ssi 'fog', ki: 'tree' and ki: 'hair'. As these data do not offer a different pattern of distinctions, Hattori argues that in all Ryukyuan varieties the opposition between the proto-forms \*kui and \*ki was lost. Nevertheless, the transcription of the lexical item ssi 'fog', which Hattori uses for the Hateruma dialect, does not correspond to what I collected during my own fieldwork on the island. According to my data, the word for fog, analysed through spectrogram observation, is [kɪsi], in which there is a voiceless velar stop in initial position. This transcription is the same as in Hirayama (1988, p. 244).

Table 10. Shuri reflexes of proto-Japanese \*kəi, \*kui and \*ki<sup>11</sup>

Old Japanese		Proto-Japanese	Shuri
*kəi>k'i	<i>otsu</i>	*kəi	*kəi>*ke>ki
*kui>k'i		*kui	*kui>*ki>*k'i> t̪i
*ki>k'i	<i>kō</i>	*ki	*ki>*k'i> t̪i

The lexical items listed in Table 11 have been transcribed through an acoustic analysis of the audio material which I collected during a fieldwork in 2008. No significant differences have been observed with the transcriptions reported in the dictionary of basic terms of southern Ryukyu dialects of Hirayama (1988).<sup>12</sup> As we can see, syllables corresponding to *kō-rui* \*ki in Old Japanese have a fricative alveolar consonant in the Hateruma dialect followed by a central high vowel *i*. Even though there are some cases in which the syllable corresponding to *kō-rui* \*ki has not changed into *si*, probably because they are borrowings which have replaced more ancient words,<sup>13</sup> I have found no case in which the initial consonant of the syllable corresponding to *otsu-rui* \*ki has changed into a fricative. Therefore, we have three distinct syllables corresponding to Old Japanese *kō-rui* and *otsu-rui* \*ki: *si*, which corresponds to *kō-rui* \*ki; *ki* and *ki* which correspond to *otsu-rui* \*ki. Instead of the Shuri dialect and the other Ryukyuan varieties, the Hateruma dialect keeps the opposition between the proto-forms \*kui and \*ki distinct.

11 The lexical data of the Shuri dialect come from Kokuritsu kokugo kenkyūjo (1963).

12 The word for ‘moon’ in the Hateruma dialect has been transcribed as [sjkĕn] in Hirayama (1988, p. 423), with a centralized front mid vowel [ĕ] in the second syllable. I transcribed this word as [sjkin], because the formants of the vowel in the spectrogram are at the same height as in the second vowel of the word [ʔari] ‘ant’, uttered by the same speaker (the audio also suggests a central high vowel instead of a centralized mid vowel). Hirayama (1988, p. 423) also reports the compound [sjkĕpintsĭ] ‘time’, in which the first element is the word for ‘moon’ [sjkĕ] with the final high vowel [i] instead of a mid vowel [ĕ].

13 The words for ‘wound’ (*kizu* in modern Japanese) and ‘time’ (*toki* in modern Japanese) have a *kō-rui* \*ki (*ki*,) in Old Japanese (Igarashi 1969). In the Hateruma dialect, the cognates of these words are [kiḍʒi] ‘wound’ and [t̪sjki] ‘time’, in which the initial consonant of the proto-Japanese \*ki has not changed into a fricative as in the lexical items listed in table 11. However, we may suppose that they are borrowings from other Ryukyuan varieties because other words with the same meaning are present: for the word for ‘wound’ Hirayama (1988, p. 234) clearly says that in the Hateruma dialect there are the words [jamahe] and [kiʒi], of which the former is the old expression and the latter is the new expression; for the word for ‘time’ Hirayama (1988, p. 457) reports both the word [baʃu] and [tsjki] (the two words seem to have though a different use).

Table 11. OJ *ki*<sub>1</sub> and *ki*<sub>2</sub> in the Hateruma dialect

OJ <i>ki</i> <sub>1</sub> ( <i>kō-rui</i> )			OJ <i>ki</i> <sub>2</sub> ( <i>otsu-rui</i> )		
衣	'dress'	sɨŋu	木	'tree'	ki:
肝	'liver'	sɨŋu	起きる	'get up'	ʔugirun
聞く	'hear'	sɨkun	月	'moon'	sɨkiŋ
息	'breath'	ʔisi	月日	'time'	sɨkiʔintsi
岬	'promontory'	sasi	霧	'fog'	kɨsi
脇	'side'	basi	茎	'stem'	ɸɨki
昨日	'yesterday'	sɨŋu			

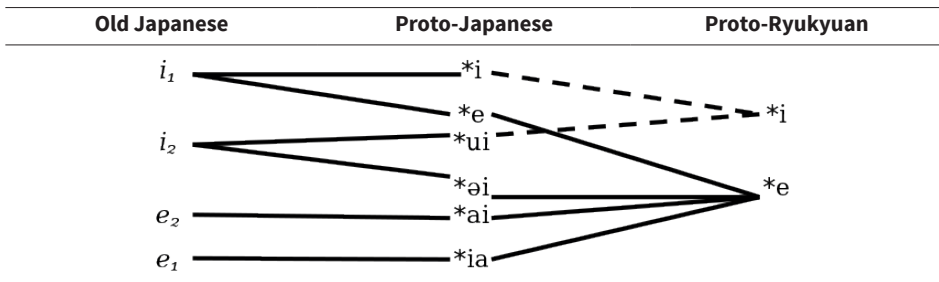
No merger can be observed for the Hateruma dialect. The proto-form \*ki has undergone a process of palatalization, induced by the high vowel environment. The strong aspiration in word-initial voiceless obstruent, typical of the Hateruma dialect, together with the palatalization might have been the cause of the complete spirantization of the voiceless velar stop. The diphthong of the proto-form \*kui has changed into the central high vowel *i* with a process similar to that occurred in Old Japanese. Finally, the proto-form \*kai has first changed into \*ke and then to ki, like in all the varieties of Yaeyama subgroup. In this way, the Hateruma dialect seems to be the only Japonic variety which preserves the distinction of the three proto-forms reconstructed by Hattori (Table 12). If this is correct, it adds something new to Hattori's theory, while supporting and enhancing it at the same time. By positing these three proto-forms as the first step of sound change, it is possible to reconstruct sequences of phonetically motivated sound changes both for Old Japanese and the Hateruma dialect.

Table 12. The Hateruma reflexes of proto-Japanese \*kai, \*kui and \*ki

Old Japanese	Proto-Japanese	Hateruma
*kai > k'i <i>otsu</i>	*kai	*kai > *ke > ki (gi)
*kui > k'i	*kui	*kui > ki
*ki > k'i <i>kō</i>	*ki	*ki > *kji > *kʲi > *kʲi > si

Table 13, taken from Pellard (2013, p. 87), clearly illustrates the evolutions of proto-Japanese vowels which have given rise to proto-Ryukyuan \*i and \*e. Here, proto-Japanese \*i and \*ui merge as proto-Ryukyuan \*i, as it has been hypothesized by Hattori. However, the evidence from the Hateruma dialect suggests that the merger of these two proto-forms was not completed in proto-Ryukyuan, at least until the moment when the Hateruma dialect split from it. This means that we have to give to the Hateruma dialect a particular historical position within the Yaeyama subgroup.

Table 13. Old Japanese and proto-Ryukyuan reflexes of the proto-Japanese diphthongs



## 7 Conclusions

Among ryukyuanists the Hateruma dialect is generally regarded as an innovative variety. Through the examples analysed above, we have observed the results of several sound changes occurred in the Hateruma dialect, like the pharyngealized vowel, sonorant devoicing, noun-final consonant epenthesis and spirantization of voiceless velar stop before the vowel \*i, which undoubtedly make the Hateruma dialect an innovative variety. However, at the same time, it preserves a distinction of proto-Japanese syllables which has been lost in all other Japonic varieties. If this theory is correct, it must have direct implications as regards the position of the Hateruma dialect within the Yaeyama subgroup.

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## Wagō Ryōichi's *Net-poetry* and the Revolutionary 'Shared Literature'

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**Abstract** Although the Fukushima literary scenario offers different approaches to the theme of dystopia and trauma, works of literary criticism are still a few. This article aims to turn scholars' attention to the relevance of a critic analysis of Fukushima literary response starting from the production of Wagō Ryōichi and his poetical tweets. The purpose is to suggest new study guidelines concerning the literature of the catastrophe as a genre itself, thorough the investigation of the use of words as a vehicle of memory and by extension, the social role of literature towards catastrophe. Wagō's works also offer the chance to investigate the relationship between literature and social networks, in so far as the success of Wagō's *net-poetry* raises concerns about the development of this global communication system to overcome trauma in real time; as a new mean of literary expression, Wagō's *net-poetry* also contributes to the literary debate by spreading literary works all over the world in just one click.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 A Voice from Fukushima Debris. – 3 Wagō's *Net-poetry* and the 'Shared Literature'. – 4 Conclusions.

**Keywords** Wagō Ryōichi. Fukushima. Literature. Trauma. Catastrophe.

«Literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested  
in the complex relation between  
knowing and not knowing.  
As it is at the specific point in which  
knowing and not knowing intersect  
that the language of literature and  
psychoanalytic theory of  
traumatic experience precisely meet»  
(Caruth 1996, p. 3)

### 1 Introduction

The three-fold catastrophe of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown that occurred in Japan on 11 March 2011 prompted public attention to reevaluate the nuclear energy debate and its link to the discourse of civilization. Despite all the efforts of international humanitarian aids to help survivors of the devastated Tōhōku area, it was the meltdown of the Fuku-



shima Nuclear Power Plant that captured the attention on a worldwide scale. The dangers arising from nuclear radiation contamination and the struggle over contingency plans in making reactors 1 and 2 safe during their decommissioning – these appeared to be the focus of much media coverage soon after 11 March. Japanese 3/11 became a locus for a double-face disaster, both natural and man-made, including the human mismanagement of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant.

The first literary responses addressed this double-faced dimension of the disaster: the novelist Murakami Haruki was the first one to talk about *mujō* in his acceptance speech of the International Catalunya Prize in Spain, on 9 June 2011. The Buddhist perspective of *mujō* refers to the transience of the things of the world and the frailty of life. Despite the excessive *ganbarism*, the ability of Japanese to endure hardship (Gebhardt, Masami 2014, p. 13) was sometimes mistaken for indifference or insensibility, the concept of *mujō* serves to better explain the response to 3/11 as the spontaneous reaction of people who have lived with a long history of natural disasters. Although Murakami himself recognized the feeling of resignation implied in *mujō*, the concept revises the stereotype of Japanese as passive, yet hardworking people (DiNitto 2014, p. 343) and takes into consideration the history of Japan as a seismically active area, a place subjected to many earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions ever since. The literary tradition itself features many masterpieces by authors like Kamo no Chōmei, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Ibuse Masuji,<sup>1</sup> whose work all expressed a concern about catastrophes and disasters that occurred throughout Japan's history and the efforts necessary to overcome the trauma left in their wake.

Even the Nobel Prize Ōe Kenzaburō stands out as an example of a novelist who admitted the double nature of 3/11 and argued for the necessity for Japan to assume responsibility for the Fukushima disasters: a sense of responsibility that has been somewhat undermined by the victim-consciousness and historical amnesia prompted by the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, *genbaku/genpatsu* debate popped out soon

1 Kamo no Chōmei (鴨長明, 1153 or 1155-1216), Japanese essayist and *waka* poet. His masterpiece entitled *Hōjōki* (An Account of a Ten-Foot-Square Hut) is a Japanese literary classic written in 1212, the report of various calamities that stroke the capital Kyōto during what is called the 'Age of Dharma Decline', according to Buddhist thought. Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (芥川龍之介, 1 March 1892-24 July 1927), Japanese writer considered the father of the short story. Well-known for being the author of *Rashōmon* (The Wall of Defensive Walls), transposed by director Kurosawa in a filmic masterpiece (1950) that won the Oscar; the Akutagawa Prize now bears his name. This writer witnessed an economic downturn and managed to escape from the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923. Ibuse Masuji (井伏鱒二, 15 February 1898-10 July 1993) Japanese novelist famous all over the world for *Kuroi ame* (Black Rain), a work of *genbaku bungaku* considered as a blend of fictional and non-fictional elements.

2 Ōe's feelings are expressed in an article published under the *History Repeats* in the March issue of the *New Yorker* (2011).

after 11 March: scholars underlined the different nature of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings (*genbaku* 原爆) versus the Fukushima nuclear accident (*genpatsu* 原発).<sup>3</sup> Ōe has always been extremely passionate about arguing for no-nuclear proliferation and calling for different modes of historical reflection so to prevent the sinking of Hiroshima and Nagasaki experiences into oblivion in the government's push for a nuclear future;<sup>4</sup> he shares the concerns expressed by many authors like Kawakami Hiromi and Takahashi Gen'ichirō,<sup>5</sup> just to name a few, who actively supported the decision to abolish nuclear-produced electrical power.

*Genshiryoku ni hantai suru hyakko no jyūbunna riyū ~ 100 gute Gründe gegen Atomkraft ~ (100 Good Reasons Against Nuclear Power)*<sup>6</sup> and Project Fukushima are just two of the anti-nuclear movements born soon after 3/11 which involved authors like Tawada Yōko and Wagō Ryōichi respectively. These writers represent the voices of the Japanese people who live in constant fear of nuclear accidents. Their works spread the words of healing and encouragement by keeping alive the memory of both victims and survivors who had to leave the evacuated areas near the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant and they also bear witness to the traumatic experience of 3/11.

To investigate the role of these literary responses towards what is now simply addressed by scholars as «Fukushima disaster», is then necessary to look deeply into the meaning of «disaster» itself and pay attention to the correlation between it and trauma.

As reported by Rachel DiNitto (2014)<sup>7</sup> a «disaster» can be defined as the work of human agency that occurs when the structure of meaning is

3 See, for example, Kimura Saeko and her *Shinsai bungaku ron. Atarashii Nihon bungaku no tame ni* (A Theory of the Literature of the Catastrophe: For a New Japanese Literature) (2013).

4 See his journalistic inquiry called *Hiroshima Nōto* (Hiroshima notes, 1965), then translated in English and published in 1996.

5 Kawakami Hiromi (川上弘美, 1 April 1958-), Japanese fiction writer. Her participation in Fukushima discourse refers to her rewriting of *Kamisama* (God, 1994) in a nuclear emergency key (*Kamisama 2011*, 2011). The recent collection of essays *Haretari Kumottari* (Sunny, cloudy, 2013) is worth to mention too. Takahashi Gen'ichirō (高橋 源一郎, 1 January 1951-), Japanese fiction and non-fiction writer. Prolific author of essays on Fukushima Disaster theme as 'Ano hi' kara boku ga kangateiru 'tadashisa' ni tsuite (On the 'Correctness' I Have Been Considering Since 'That Day', 2012) and *Hijōji no kotoba: shinsai no ato de* (Language in a Time of Crisis: After the Earthquake 2012). Nevertheless, his first literary response to the 3/11 was the novel *Koi suru genpatsu* (A Nuclear Reactor in Love, 2011).

6 *Genshiryoku ni hantai suru hyakko no jyūbunna riyū ~100 gute Gründe gegen Atomkraft*~, <https://www.100-gute-gruende.de/index.xhtml> (2013-04-09). The bilingual (Japanese-German) author Tawada Yōko (多和田葉子, 23 March 1960-) has been promoting this no-nuclear proliferation project since its birth; *Kumo wo tsukamu hanashi* (A Story That Catches Clouds, 2012) and *Journal des jours tremblants. Après Fukushima* (in French, 2012) are just a few of Tawada's literary production focused on Fukushima disaster.

7 Quotation from Jeffrey Alexander's *Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma* (2004).

destabilized, for it is the collective meaning that provides the «sense of shock and fear, not the events in and of themselves» (DiNitto 2014, p. 342).

According to this theory, 'disaster' is the label given to the consequences that human beings face when natural phenomena or a man-made accident occur. An earthquake or a nuclear accident can be defined as «destructive agent» or «impact agent» (Ligi 2009, p. 16)<sup>8</sup> whose cataclysmic potential is measured by considering the crisis level reached by society after the tragical event. Then the term 'disaster' refers to the social break-up that followed the impact of the extraordinary agent (p. 16). The expression 'social break-up' suggests a chaotic and disordered situation in which people have lost their local points of reference as well as their trust in government as the protector of civilian and human rights. Luisa Bienati (2013, p. 4) also emphasizes that catastrophe is a 'social overturning': the consequence of the destruction of houses and other buildings is the fragmentation of family and community relationship. It is clear here that the collapse of buildings stands for an allegorical image of the disintegration of human relationship in general and in these terms it affects human psychology on a large-scale. In fact, what Ligi calls «carità del natio loco» (charity towards home town) (2009, p. 76) appears to be one of the reason why many people refuse to leave everything behind and escape their lives despite being warned in advance. The epitome «uprooting trauma» (Bienati 2013, p. 6) conveys the fear of losing not only one's beloved and the security of a daily routine but also the loss of one own's past: in other words, the 'natio loco' symbolizes one's own world, created with efforts that must not go to waste.

The 'disaster' thus defined is then associated with 'trauma'. Although the origin of the term can be found in the Greek word for 'wound', psychoanalytic studies attribute the quality of 'traumatic' to a grief of the mind. The difficulty lies in understanding the catastrophe and overcoming the shock and stress associated with it (trauma). The more one attempts to assimilate the nature of the events, the more one feels disoriented: hence trauma can't be identified with the tragic event itself but rather with the after-effects one has to live with daily. Survivors struggle everyday with painful memories that re-emerge out of their control. This crisis, that Freud called «traumatic neurosis» needs to be spoken of, demands our witness (Freud 1913, p. 660).

Generally speaking, 'trauma' and 'disaster' are the words of catastrophe implied on the assumption that a psychological human factor is involved. In this context what DiNitto (2014) called the «narrative of the recovery» is the fundamental key to overcome the trauma: as regards Fukushima disaster, through novels, poems and non-fictional works, the survivors

8 Any translations from Italian and Japanese are to be considered as of the Author, unless otherwise specified.

rediscover that public attention is still focused on nuclear issues and problems concerning the evacuated areas; they also fight against isolation and historical oblivion by keeping the memory of 3/11 alive.

As mentioned previously, the Japanese literary scene provided an immediate response to Fukushima disaster: even authors like Yoshimoto Banana or the literary critic Kuroko Kazuo<sup>9</sup> trod the boards with their fictional and non-fictional contributions to express their own view of the catastrophe and associated trauma. As regards to the worldwide attention paid to Fukushima literary responses, French critics Cécile Sakai and Anne Bayard-Sakai took up with the problem of communicating 3/11; among the essays and articles written in French on this theme, the literary collection published under the title *L'Archipel des séismes* (2012) is worth mentioning. The German scholar Lisette Gebhardt gave a panoramic overview on the fictional and non-fictional responses to Fukushima disaster in her *Literature and Art after Fukushima* (2014), a work co-authored by Masami Yūki; Gebhardt's efforts in investigating authors' opinions towards 3/11 have been appreciated since her first articles published in collaboration with Steffi Richter. Even in Italy, scholars contributed to the scene through the interests shown by Luisa Bienati and Gianluca Coci, just to name a few, and the translation of one of the two Japanese anthologies published on 11 March is titled *Scrivere per Fukushima* in the Italian version (2013); the other one was the first to be translated into English under the evocative title *March was made of Yarn* (2012). Among American native speakers Rachel DiNitto, Margherita Long and Daniel O'Neill have also brought their interests to the debate on Fukushima literary response and its relation with the wider theme of representing catastrophe.

This article aims to contribute to the debate by examining the poetical approach to 11 March via a critical analysis of two poems realised by the poet Wagō Ryōichi, a Fukushima-born Japanese professor who discovered the power of social networks as a vehicle to convey healing and mourning messages in a poetic form. The aim is to demonstrate the literary value of this new production in line with Japanese literary tradition (like the works of literature linked to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, works categorized as *genbaku bungaku* genre in Japanese) and, at the same time, this essay will explore the great innovational power of *net-poetry*, its global circula-

9 Yoshimoto Banana (よしもとばなな, 24 July 1964-), worldwide famous writer thanks to her popculture novels. Her contribute to Fukushima literary debate is recognisable in the fiction *Suiito Hiaafuta* (Sweet Hereafter, 2011); more information about the role her literature has in overcoming the 3/11 trauma can be found in the interview she released to me in 2013 (De Pieri 2014). Kuroko Kazuo (黒古 一夫, 12 December 1945-), well-known literary critic; his works on *genbaku bungaku* are above all notable. In the field of Fukushima literature, the 2013 *Bungakusha no 'Kaku Fukushima ron' Yoshimoto Takaaki, Ōe, Kenzaburō, Murakami Haruki*, (The Literary Scholars' 'Essay on atomic Fukushima'. Yoshimoto Takaaki, Ōe, Kenzaburō, Murakami Haruki, 2013) is of particular importance.

tion in real time and its ability to create a space in which users can comment and share poetic messages.

These two particular features of Wagō's *net-poetry* could maybe represent the missing link between literature (in the form of a poetical production) and trauma: the possibility, if not to overcome the traumatic experience, at least to learn how to deal with it everyday.

## 2 A Voice from Fukushima Debris

Wagō Ryōichi (Fukushima, 1968-) is a Japanese teacher at Fukushima High School; although in the last few years his moral commitment has led him to act as a spokesman for Fukushima disaster, taking time away from teaching classes. His poetical career started in the 1990s, when several collections of his poetry were published, some of which gained a respectable success.

Nonetheless, it is only after 11 March 2011 that Wagō grew in popularity thanks to his poetical response to the disasters: he became the defender of the stricken areas speaking on behalf of those evacuees and victims whose voice was swept away by the tsunami and hushed by the caution measures implemented by the Japanese government to prevent radiation exposure in the areas close to Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant. Love of the homeland that gave him birth and raised him prompts a sort of 'carità del natio loco': by the exhortation «*Fukushima ni ikiru, Fukushima wo ikiru*» (Live in Fukushima, live Fukushima) (Sano, Wagō 2012, p. 94) Wagō encourages survivors to stay in town and collaborate altogether for reconstruction.

Even though this motto was also used as a political slogan<sup>10</sup> by social movements demanding more state intervention in the evacuated areas, the genuineness of Wagō's message results in engagement with different projects aiming at Fukushima's recovery. Among others, Purojekuto FUKUSHIMA (Project FUKUSHIMA) is worth mentioning: an initiative started soon after 11 March with the purpose of helping the people from the surrounding areas of the Fukushima Daiichi Power Station by collecting funds on the official site and promoting events, symposiums, conferences on the theme of 3/11.<sup>11</sup>

This campaign aimed to raise awareness of Fukushima prefecture's real condition after 11 March, and has always been going hand in hand with Wagō's prolific literary production: in less than four years, he published five collections of poems, several artistic works that combine poetry and photography and also a few *taidan* (crossover interviews between authors or literary critics and journalists) a genre very popular in Japan. Famous

10 See Sano and Wagō's crossover 2012, p. 94 and the following.

11 Purojekuto FUKUSHIMA, <http://www.pj-fukushima.jp> (2012-01-22).

are also his public appearances at events and conferences where he usually reads out loud selected poems: these performances, often supported by music accompaniment, achieved resounding success among the audience and are sometimes adapted into books or sold as CDs.<sup>12</sup> The poet is involved in television and radio appearances, too: he manages his own radio program called *Shi no tsubute ~ Wagō Ryōichi's akushon poejii* (Pebbles of poetry – The action poetry by Ryōichi Wagō). This goes on air every Sundays at 17:45 from Radio Fukushima;<sup>13</sup> each show introduces a different topic of discussion concerning 3/11 organized around Wagō's poems, read and commented by the author himself. Wagō's poetry offers a panoramic perspective on the emotional chaos experienced by victims who survived the 11 March catastrophe: anxiety, fear, mourning, are just a few of the disarming feelings Wagō matches with the more positive messages of hope, recover as well as the possibility of overcoming the trauma.

The educational background of the author must be kept into mind too: he was in the middle of a school meeting when the magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck off the Tōhoku coasts; his familiarity with Japanese literary tradition draws him to return to the classics as a site to generate new interpretative works based on the 3/11 tragedy. Here is an example:

をせをせをせ  
 をせをせ  
 いきれをせをせ  
 をせのをせ

Give back my soul, give back my dreams, give back Fukushima, give back my life, give back my hometown, give back the grass, give back my village, give back my poetry, give back the walnut tree (May 25, 2011, 22:19)<sup>14</sup>

This free-verse poem is now available for readers in both Japanese and English versions, as a part of a longer poetical work published on Wagō's official website under the title *Suiheisen'yo Chiheisen'yo* (Horizon Over the Sea, Horizon Over the Land).<sup>15</sup> Although originally it was conceived as

12 The first one to stress the importance of a «performative, dialogical uses of language» was Dominick LaCapra (2001, Preface).

13 *Shi no tsubute – Ryōichi Wagō no akushon poejii*, [http://www.rfc.jp/podcast/podcast\\_program.php?program\\_id=4](http://www.rfc.jp/podcast/podcast_program.php?program_id=4) (2016-03-02). The author takes part in JFN radio program too, [http://www.jfn.jp/RadioShows/place\\_thu/624](http://www.jfn.jp/RadioShows/place_thu/624) (2015-01-02).

14 This poem was composed by only one tweet (verse). The graphic layout is a mere editorial expedient.

15 <http://wago2828.com/translation/3584.html> (2016-05-30).

a tweet in itself, published on 25 May 2011 on Wagō's Twitter profile, this poem's length follows perfectly the social network rules of writing with no more than 140 characters (the relation between Wagō's poetry and social networks will be discussed in details later).

Nevertheless, the poem also reveals an incredible intensity of expression for the topic covered: soul, dreams and life are all synonyms for the future. On 11 March soul was grief-stricken, dreams were blown to pieces and several people lost their lives in the same way they lost their hope for future, choked with fear of radiation, anxiety for the reconstruction, helplessness in front of an unknown tomorrow. The «Fukushima» quotation represents the double face of the same coin, both nostalgic and destructive. Here «Fukushima» refers not only to the prefecture but also to a space inclusive of people, animals, material assets taken away from the tsunami, first, and by governmental measure of evacuation, second; it personifies 3/11 in its destructive power to the extent that it has become impossible to pronounce the name of «Fukushima» nowadays without immediately connecting it to the 11 March catastrophe. At the same time, the imperative «give back Fukushima» aims at drawing readers' memories of an untouched Fukushima before the earthquake; the same nostalgic feeling arises again in the words «give back my hometown», where the author refers to Fukushima as well as to Japan in the broadest sense, calling for the collective participation of all Japanese people to respond to the tragedy of the Tōhōku areas. Generally speaking, it is not wrong to say that these two verses springs from the poet's intimate sphere, as remarked by the few verses about poetry and walnut tree, both which are dear to the poet, and expanded in social influence to the public sphere, where Japanese people are involved as a group.

This choice reflects Tōge Sankichi's work in *Ningen wo kaese* (Give back human race) a poem engraved on a monument in front of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial; this poem is well-known all over the world as the symbol for peace after Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. Composed at the beginning of the 1950s, the poem states as follows:

にんげんをかえせ  
ちちをかえせははをかえせ  
としよりをかえせ  
こどもをかえせ

わたしをかえせわたしにつながる  
にんげんをかえせ  
にんげんのにんげんのよのあるかぎり  
くずれぬへいわを  
へいわをかえせ

Give back human race  
 Give back my father, give back my mother  
 Give old people back  
 Give children back

Give back myself the human race I am connected to,  
 Give them back  
 As long as this life lasts, this life,  
 Give back peace  
 That will never end  
 (Tōge 1951)

The original version of this poem was entitled *Iki* (Life) and sounds slightly different from the one published only later in the collection called *Genbaku Shishū* (Poems of the Atomic bomb, 1951); even though this study is not focused on the genre *genbaku bungaku*, the new perspective this poem gives to Wagō's tweet is remarkable. The incisive imperative «give», repeated several times in both poems hides a feeling of anger while resentment and indignation symbolize the common denominator nourished by nuclear power-linked tragedies experienced by the two authors. Wagō confirmed in a personal interview he released to me in 2013 that this analogy is not a mere chance: «This is a poem I wrote while being inspired by Tōge Sankichi» (De Pieri 2014, pp. 203-206).

Wagō also shared the same struggle over language, specifically the inability to depict the disaster through words: this difficulty of expression was also reported and thematized by many *genbaku* authors such as Ōta Yōko, Hara Tamiki and Tōge Sankichi himself.<sup>16</sup> This representational challenge led to the creation of neologisms as well as *hiragana* and *katakana* experimentations, adopted also by Wagō who declared: «for the sake of a new poetry, let's live a new poetry» (Wagō 2012), adding his voice to Tōge in calling for the release of a new poetical production.

Despite the frequent homages Wagō pays to the Japanese literary tradition, it is in his choice of using social networks as a vehicle for poetry that he obtained success. Although the link between literature and social media will be analysed later, the innovative aspects of this *net-poetry* are brought to attention through a poem written on 21 March, 2013 on Wagō's Twitter profile and here it will be reproduced entirely despite its unusual length:

**16** Ōta Yōko (大田洋子, 18 November 1906-10 December 1963), Hara Tamiki (原民喜, 15 November 1905-13 March 1951) and Tōge Sankichi (峠三吉 19 February 1917-10 March 1953) are *genbaku bungaku* writers who witnessed the atomic bombings. They struggled to convey their experiences into words (*hiragana* and *katakana* experimentation's origins can be found here); Ōta in particular expressed several times the inadequacy of Japanese language in front of the catastrophe.



をくためになこと 孤独

To write poetry you need isolation

をくためになこと にないこと

To write poetry you need something words cannot express

をくためになこと な

To write poetry you need a useless day

をくためになこと 殺気

To write poetry you need a thirst for blood

をくためになこと のの

To write poetry you need no man's park at night

をくためになこと いい

To write poetry you need to think about something and laugh

をくためになこと り

To write poetry you need betrayal

をくためになこと つながれたのしさ

To write poetry you need the beloved hand you managed to tie

をくためになこと いま ここ あなたをうためいき

To write poetry you need now, here, thinking about you, a sigh

をくためになこと スタイル・カウンシル

To write poetry you need Police, David Bowie, Style Council,  
Sakamoto Ryūichi

をくためになこと 小指

To write poetry you need the little finger

をくためになこと るに こぼれる 涙

To write poetry you need tears ran down before sleeping

をくためになこと 柿

To write poetry you need a kaki tree

をくためになこと りげるまえののしなり

To write poetry you need the feeling when a fish swallows the bait  
before catching it

をくためになこと のの

To write poetry you need wine before a toast

をくためになこと 恋人

To write poetry you need your lover

をくためになこと 屈辱

To write poetry you need humiliation

をくためになこと あらゆるへのとにうためになものとはかをうこと

To write poetry you need to ask what is necessary in order to fight completely the discriminations against all weak people

をくためになこと さ

To write poetry you need weakness

をくためになこと さをる さ

To write poetry you need strength to protect weakness

をくためになこと 山

To write poetry you need mounts

をくためになこと そこにがあるからるための

To write poetry you need trekking shoes to climb the mountain over there

をくためになこと の奥の そののけ...

To write poetry you need in the forest deeply inside loophole...

をくためになこと 六本木七丁目交差点

To write poetry you need Roppongi nanachōme intersection

をくためになこと もいないの

To write poetry you need the desolated Namie Station

をくためになこと であるいはスター

で で で この

を ここまでんだ あなたの

To write poetry you need your profile while reading these tweets 'till this one at the MacDonald's or Starbucks with your smartphone or your laptop

をくためになこと 革命

To write poetry you need revolution

をくためになこと 後悔

To write poetry you need regret

をくためになこと るにの で なんとなくをつめているあなた それをつめている  
もうの ののあなた

To write poetry you need you, somehow staring at the monitor in  
front of your laptop before sleeping and you, in your heart, staring at  
everything

をくためになこと かな

To write poetry you need the quiet Pacific Ocean

をくためになこと 防護服

To write poetry you need protecting clothing

をくためになこと 桜

To write poetry you need cherry trees

をくためになこと の

To write poetry you need a spring hawk

をくためになこと 詩

To write poetry you need poetry

あなたにとって

をくためになこととはですか

どうか

きをおいします おやすみなさい...

For you «To write poetry you need» what?

please, continue [doing poetry] somehow goodnight

(March 23, 2013, 23:50 ca)

Each poetical verse of this poem represents a tweet posted on the social network, for a total of 38 tweets; Wagō refreshed the *renzoku geemu*, a very popular game in Japan which consists of a series of words closely related to each other: a kind of brain storming exercise allows players to reveal their feelings, ideas, and thoughts. As the game of word association can be very intimate and private, it is not surprising that sometimes the reader runs up against the difficulty of understanding the connections between verses.

Here «isolation» and «no man's park at night» are expressions used to describe the loneliness that filled up Fukushima city after 3/11. The anger against an unfair destiny is underlined by the keywords «a thirst for blood» (the need to find a culprit), «betrayal» (government's lies about the

security of Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant, which was about to be decommissioning in March 2011 becoming obsolete), «regret» (regards the lack of efforts to avoid the tragedy). The words «humiliation» and «weakness» stand for a sense of powerlessness victims shared after the tsunami. The different places to which the poet was acclimatized (Roppongi, as well as the Namie Station) are frequently mentioned. The awareness of the media and literary «revolution» in which the poet has a leading role is demonstrated by the poetic reflections on laptop and smartphone users and the multinational corporations of junk food. A direct reference to the nuclear danger can be found in the expression «protective clothing» while the need of trekking shoes suggests a wild path to cover in order to climb a mountain: the desire to reach the top and recover the sense of self-control lost during the earthquake; at the same time, the protection found in the depths of the forest suggests the wish to get to the deepest recess of one's heart, where trauma lingers.

What is surprising is the final invitation to continue by participating in the process of creating the poem: although many verses are devoted to loved ones, here Wagō takes advantage from the social network's potentiality to get directly in touch with the users and asking directly to participate in composing poetry. Users' feelings, ideas, thoughts, are now taken into account: readers are no longer passive, but they are asked to be active, to challenge themselves in promoting literature, as well as to volunteer in social activities in the evacuated areas. These interfaces can be read between the lines. To this final request of writing, which all of us are required to answer: the original Japanese version of the verse «to write a poetry you need» is actually an impersonal one, a stylistic choice that underlines the universal message sent by Wagō.

### 3 Wagō's Net-poetry and the 'Shared Literature'

The 'twitterature' phenomenon is still a long way from being a new revolution. The term, clearly a portmanteau word of 'Twitter' and 'literature', was probably coined by web users and became well-known thanks to Alexander Aciman and Emmett Rensin's book *Twitterature* (2009). Here is how the authors described their idea of 'twitterature' (Aciman, Rensin 2010): «if the Prince of Denmark [Hamlet] had a Twitter account and an iPhone, he could tell his story in real time - and concisely! Hence the genius of *Twitterature*».

It was in 2008 that for the first time the relation between literature and Twitter came to the fore; created in 2006, this social network is used by almost 284 million monthly active users, with an average of 500 million tweets sent per day (according to Twitter Inc). Hence it is not surprising that 'twitterature' draws the attention of literary critics too.

The «literary social networking» as Dylan Hicks called it (2010) is the attempt to get online literature underway through the rediscovery of ancient classics or modern experimentation with lyricism. The only one rule to follow is not to exceed 140-character, a maximum imposed by the medium. This formal constraint can operate in different modes literary productions: from aphorisms and *haiku* to other forms of serialized fictional productions under the neologisms of ‘tweet fic’ (Twitter fiction) or ‘twiller’ (Twitter thriller), just to name a few, that extend over multiple tweets. Every Twitter user can contribute with a micro-narrative on Twitter, according to one’s own taste or creativity or it can correspond to someone else’s preference: just add the hashtag #140novel or similar, as suggested by the British newspaper *The Guardian* in autumn 2012. This newspaper was also the first one to raise doubts about the birth of a new literary genre, through the voice of the journalist Claire Armitstead (2014). Although this new way of microblogging challenges people to write deeper than what Twitter requires, numerous guides and pamphlets for beginners have been made available on the Internet since 2008. Even today ‘twitterature’ has brought notoriety to a few users.

The Japanese fostered a totally different approach to social networks. As noted by the journalist Inose Naoki (2011, p. 7), the mass media had a fundamental role in the transmission of information with special issues devoted to the tsunami and earthquake updates, via radio and television, but there were also the new social networks (Facebook and Twitter in primis) that guaranteed a constant flow of information concerning the real condition of the disaster areas, the emergency number to refer to, the different ways to collaborate with voluntary activities and above all, messages warning others about the aftershocks that followed the earthquake. Hence, the innovational production of Wagō Ryōichi can be considered as a missing piece of a puzzle that shows a joined portrait of catastrophe-trauma-literature triplets.

Actually, 11 March 2001 marked a turning point for Wagō Ryōichi’s poetical career: on 16 March he started publishing his poems on Twitter and got immediate feedback from users from the web. In a *taidan* with the non-fiction writer Sano Shin’ichi the poet declared this was not a conscious choice (Sano, Wagō 2012, p. 36): «I merely didn’t think about it, felt like my fingers moved naturally. As writing poems like that have always been an habit, fingers moved on their own way». Wagō loses his thoughts into words unconsciously; the critic Takushi Odagiri observed:

Despite its apparently straightforwardness, Wagō’s work is neither a simple representation, nor message, nor even a call for action [...] nor simply an inert report of post-earthquake experiences. [...] Wagō’s tweets accidentally become *acts* generated by historical circumstances. (Odagiri 2014, p. 368)

Wagō's tweets are not a mere sequence of updates by an anonymous user of the network: they make history in the form of poems; it is not wrong to consider Wagō's *net-poetry* as a non-fictional production realised in a poetical form rather than the common narrative one.

A consciousness of linguistic nuances and grammatical structures is needed in order to be able to publish in only 140 characters; nevertheless, despite the winnowing down of words before composing poetry, the poet has never felt constrained nor the need to revise his feelings: the result is a straightforward production in which all 11 March victims can identify themselves (Azuma 2012, p. 16): «At that time, I intuitively noticed that what I wrote before the disaster was given forth by unconscious stances, in 'updating language' or literary language.»

What is thought-provoking here is the use of an «updating language» (the language of social networks updates) and a literary language (the one typical of poetical lyricism) at the same time.

Although all poems are subsequently published in a proper way on print media, they all first witnessed their birth on the social network: the term 'net-poetry' tries to explain this ambivalent nature. On one hand, the abbreviation 'net' stands for 'network', a global platform that connects users worldwide; on the other side, 'poetry' refers to the artistic choice of composing poems and the lyricism peculiar to this literary genre. Even if poetry is thought to be useless because it cannot provide tangible help, Wagō continues posting his poetry on Twitter and Facebook channel non-stop, because he does not have any other means of expression. The great sense of helplessness due to the fact that «you can't describe in a proper way the earthquake disaster status Fukushima is embracing» (Sano, Wagō 2012, p. 48) is a motivating factor that the authors who tried their hand at describing catastrophe share. If communicating is impossible, what is necessary then are the efforts in doing it: «I would like to tell the reality of the stricken Fukushima to several people» (Sano, Wagō 2012, p. 63). The need to describe the traumatic experience and the authors' sense of responsibility will find an answer in the desire of keeping victims' memories alive so that their sacrifice would not be considered vain and, at the same time, to stress the importance of a social commitment to promote nuclear disarmament:

As long as there will be at least one person who reads or tells [about disaster] I think that work of literature will be necessary. Moreover, I think it should become a sort of bridge of words to connect the readers with next future, expressed in a new way. The fear of earthquake and tsunami, the fear of society's lies, and then, after Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, the current nuclear fallout... I think that if we do not speak about these events properly then they will happen again. Above all, after accepting the fact that several people lost their lives in

the disaster: after this recognition of loss, I think one must carry on to tell everybody these stories. (Wagō 2013, private interview)

It was the poet who expressed clearly his feelings in the interview he released to me in 2013. Like Ōe and most of the Japanese people, Wagō too, connected the danger of nuclear contamination with the experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, underlining the role of literature and the sense of trauma and responsibility that all human beings have to bear in the face of catastrophe. Wagō's attempt is to spread this message worldwide, putting in the foreground the victims' memories. Social networks are the best means to pursue this aim: on the one hand, they register specific dates and time, functioning as real documentary testimonies; on the other hand, social media sites may connect users from all over the world and Wagō's poetry becomes a literary work immediately enjoyable by the global public. As seen earlier, the possibility of taking an active part in composing poetry merits full investigation, too, as the creative contribution from web users helped FUKUSHIMA<sup>17</sup> literary works to proliferate and spread (Sano, Wagō 2012, p. 39): «I felt like they were encouraging me 'let's try continuing tomorrow too'». Users' comments, opinions, ideas, are welcomed by the author who is inevitably boggled by them. The result is a literary production influenced directly by public interests, marking out a change in themes, subjects, and environment. A 'global' way to compose poetry, totally anew, has seen its birth: the 'shared literature', characterized by the possibility of 'sharing' poetry as well as one's own view of poetry, in the form of comments or new verse, in real time all over the world. Wagō (2013, private interview) stated:

I think that social networks offers us what would be a revolutionary way of communication. I think that poetry should be sensitive to the demands of communication, above all. So I really feel poetical means should change. I think everyday about the meeting point between social networks and poetry.

#### 4 Conclusion

Throughout human history, the world has been fraught with many catastrophic and tragic events that transform literature into a serious work of art that bears witness to the trauma. The Jewish Shoah, Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, Armenia and Rwanda genocides, 11 Septem-

<sup>17</sup> Here the capital letters for FUKUSHIMA stand for a city suffering from atomic contamination, as the bombarded HIROSHIMA and NAGASAKI, written in *katakana* in the major *genbaku bungaku* works.

ber, the 2004 Sumatra Earthquake: these are only a few of the disaster events witnessed by modern age.

Many survivors think about oblivion as the only way to stop sorrow and pain even though «one cannot simply leave [it] behind» (Caruth 1996, p. 2): the price to be paid when one tries to hide a traumatic experience is not being able to overcome the trauma it caused.

Other survivors felt the urge to speak on behalf of those who refused to do so, or have no longer a voice to tell of their experience. The witness, although fuelled by a range of different reasons, is above all driven by the need to keep both personal and social memory alive. Hence the importance of a literary study as a written testimony: first or second hand accounts normally take the shape of documentary novels, journalistic enquiries and other piece of literature which refer to non-fictional genre. A thorny topic is to define the approach of novels (and narratology in a wider sense) in offering an alternative mode of understanding trauma provoked by the catastrophe. If both the second hand accounts and the fictional re-productions of the traumatic event raise doubts about the authenticity of the experience described, then the documentary approach to tragedy will also call into question the literariness of the piece of work itself.

Independently of the oral or written forms the testimony assumes, it is always the work of deformation and the reworking of a personal experience that cast doubt about the reliability of the account. The intrinsic value of this work of translating catastrophe and trauma into narrative form, is predicated on (Caruth 1996, p. 4) «the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available.» In other words, any endeavour to convey into words a traumatic experience become an opportunity for sharing the knowledge of it (Caruth 1996, p. 5): «[it] must, indeed, also be spoken in a language that is always somehow literary: a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding».

This study does not uphold the literary value of Wagō's 'net-poetry': it outlines the innovation of this new expressive language as a meeting point between literature and social networks: unlike other literary productions (see 'twitterature') the 'net-poetry' can be considered as a psychoanalytic means to overcome collective trauma, a process of overcoming that is aided by two qualities attributed to the social media itself: the possibility of communicating in real time and the quality of being a part of the worldwide system of communication. In other terms, a victim can share his feeling of fear, loss and astonishment with thousands other users worldwide at the same time, thanks to socials; moreover, and this is peculiar to Wagō's 'net-poetry', those feelings are reproduced in a poetical form, and its lyricism arouses empathy, sensibility, pathos, with the result of fighting together the loneliness and powerlessness of the traumatic situation.

Here hence the difference between *genbaku bungaku* genre: though the common denominator of nuclear radiation exposure by the victims, now la-



belled as 'hibakusha', the exceptionality of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings still generates a ghettoize literary works on nuclear radiation, a lack of knowing as a contributing factor. As a result, this genre has been rediscovered only in the recent years compared to the Fukushima literary responses; otherwise, Fukushima literature remarked from the beginning is concerned with the universal repercussion of the accident occurred at Daiichi Power Plant.

The voices of Wagō and other authors helped to raise awareness among the public on the nuclear issue and to keep alive the memory of the victims through messages of commemoration and healing. Actually, among the topics for thought in Wagō's poems, according to the frequent discussions about the meaning of words, poetry, and the poet himself, there is also a Japanese motto often repeated: 'akenai yoru wa nai' (There's no night that does not open to the day); a motto embraced by all earthquake victims who, in Wagō's poetry, found brightness after the darkness of the 11 March 2011.

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# **Survey on the Pragmatic Elements of Television Interviews**

## What Can be Learnt from Japanese Talk Shows

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**Abstract** This study analyses the pragmatic aspects of intracultural management of TV interview in Japanese. In particular, it investigates how speakers, in order to achieve their communication goals, often melt together their sociopragmatic values with an unconventional use of language. From a didactic point of view, this observation proves to be particularly significant since it helps to reduce the boundary between a pedagogical approach too often linked to models of syntactic-grammatical correctness and a more recent one which tries to come as close as possible to actual interactional models by promoting awareness of intralingual communication strategies, and reducing socio-pragmatic, pragmalinguistic and intercultural mistakes by foreign/second language learners. From a methodological perspective, the presentation intends to clarify the inner dynamics of pragmatic management of the interview with the following goals: a) intercepting intracultural dynamics of content management and feedbacks through a bottom up approach by utilizing transcription techniques of CA; b) extracting and isolating those key concepts apt to describe TV interview features in Japanese without imposing them through a top-down model; c) stimulating a reflection that goes beyond the analysis of language itself in order to understand the iconic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic aspects of communication.

**Sommario** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Television Interview. – 2.1 First Video: the Interview with the Singer Hirai Ken. – 2.2 Second Video: the Interview-narration with the Singer Tokunaga Hideaki. – 3 Conclusions.

**Keywords** Japanese teaching. Intercultural pragmatics. Audiovisual input.

## **1 Introduction**

In foreign language teaching, the question arose of how to organize valid pedagogical interventions able to convey the necessary pragmatic skills of the languages being taught. Referring to the so-called SPEAKING model proposed by Dell Hymes (1927-2009) and on the basis of his studies on intercultural communication, Balboni (2012) includes an analysis of the languages within a more generic *communication learning* framework, thereby indicating not only the ability of the learners to «exchange effective messages» using a language (pp. 121-125) but also the importance of recogniz-

ing two basic structural levels in each of the various communication genres: a first universal element also called template, which identifies the typology, and a second local one, which bears different stylistic elements depending on the languacultures in which they have developed. Hofstede (1991) points out that the proficiency in the communication genres in the target languages must necessarily pass through three stages of awareness, knowledge and skill, where 'awareness' means the acknowledgment of the peculiarities of intracultural communication strategies, 'knowledge' refers to the study of the sociocultural aspects of the languaculture being studied (resulting from the sum of way of life and way of thinking) and 'skill' implies the actual pragmatic ability to effectively communicate through the genres selected.

Recalling this pedagogical vision and remaining within the teaching of intercultural pragmatics, it is necessary to stress how scholars have often highlighted the importance of submitting original audiovisual sources to foreign language/L2 students (Balboni, Caon 2015; Balboni 2008, 2012; Bazzanella 1994; Bettoni 2006; Diadori, Micheli 2010; Sherman 2003; Spinelli 2006) in order to stimulate a teaching renewal necessarily based on the emerging figure of a learner who increasingly «interprets» (Bonaiuti 2010, p. 87) the cultural inputs that he is selecting. To this effect, Pavone states:

The authenticity of the audiovisual sources involves a cultural investigation aimed at discovering any connotation, implicit element and meaning which is not clearly expressed but should be examined in its diversity on the basis of comparative analyses in various fields [...] Ultimately, the proper attention is paid to the specific traits of a society [...]. The acquisition of sociocultural know-how will help satisfy the needs of communicative competence. (Pavone 2003, p. 30)

Needless to repeat, this view is extremely current, especially if you look at the Internet as the main source of audiovisual materials for language learners. In this regard, the author already had the occasion to point out how these resources, thanks to their multi-informative dynamism, represent a valuable visual dictionary containing not only high-quality verbal and paraverbal (grammar, syntax, lexicon, prosody, pragmatics), but also extra-verbal (gestures, facial expression, proxemics, clothing style, accessories) and sociocultural notions that are to be integrated in the communication performances of the learners:<sup>1</sup>

1 In addition to that, from a strictly cognitive point of view, the audiovisual sources are fundamental in the observation of the interaction between language and images. Thanks to the so-called *anchorage* phenomenon, in fact, images acquire a value thanks to the various meanings that the language assumes from time to time in order to contextualize them (Balboni 2008, p. 74).

For the new generations, videos constitute new ways of expression, as well as useful tools providing information and specific knowledge. [...] Undoubtedly, the ability to comprehend and decipher authentic materials in a foreign language represents a significant stimulus to learning. This is mainly due to the fact that learners often tend to emulate the linguistic behaviour of native speakers, preferring an explicit approach in terms of communication, also able to go beyond the limits of a classical printed manual. [...] The Internet, in fact, rather than as a 'virtual library' should be defined as a photo library, video library and storage space for elements not easily harmonisable. (Vitucci 2013, pp. XI-XII)

In particular, internet access offers learners the opportunity to focus on certain communication genres and the resulting pragmalinguistic behaviours, thus improving their output skills of the chosen foreign language through emulation. Leaving aside the identity issues of the learners during the learning process (to this effect, see of Siegal 1996), this study proposes an analysis of the television interview communication type from a pragmatic point of view, by comparing two videos recently aired in Japan, where the protagonists are two famous Japanese pop singers. As for language education, the choice of these materials is intended to define more precisely the concept of *linguistic appropriateness* as defined by Hyme:

*Appropriateness* entails the sociocultural and pragmatic effectiveness of a given utterance that is formally possible and feasible 'in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated'. (Van Compernelle 2014, p. 33)

Today the definition of what should be 'appropriately' taught and learnt in the context of pure language teaching becomes an increasingly complex task. However, thanks to the continuous exposure of learners to streaming materials in the Internet, it is clear that appropriateness has to be identified and considered in its interactional dimension (Bazzanella 1994; Adornetti 2013) placing at the centre of the future communication skills of the learners not only sociopragmatic creativity, but also a process of internalization of those meanings/concepts that speakers intend to convey through the instruments at their disposal (Balboni 2012, pp. 127-135). As shown by several sources available on the Internet, this creativity should be based on not always conventional use of the language, where 'not conventional' refers to both the deviations from the linguistic conventions and any respective social contexts (Van Compernelle 2014, p. 41). In the videos selected here, for example, it is interesting to observe from a purely intercultural perspective how speakers, in order to achieve their communication goals, often employ their sociopragmatic values, resulting in a use not always conventional of the language. From a strictly educational point of view, this observation is particularly meaningful since it contributes to: i) reduce the boundary

between a teaching too often tied to patterns of syntactic-grammatical correctness and a teaching approach closer to real interactional models; ii) promote awareness of specific intralinguistic communication strategies which can prove useful in reducing any sociopragmatic, pragmalinguistic and intercultural mistake made by L2/foreign language learners (Lo Castro 2012, pp. 83-90). As Bazzanella recalls, these mistakes are often due to the fact that the cultural norms of a community influence both language production and understanding, while at intercultural level, the pragmatic elements tend to be overlooked by foreign learners because of the lack of a link between the linguistic forms in the strict sense and their broader cultural and interactional value (Bazzanella 1994, p. 216).

From a methodological perspective, this essay proposes to highlight more precisely the pragmatic dynamics in the interview management by setting the following goals:

- a. detecting the intracultural dynamics in the content and feedback management in the interviews examined through a bottom up approach by means of the typical transcriptive techniques of the conversation analysis (Fele 2007, Heritage 1998, Liddicoat 2007, Schegloff 1981). Consequently, rather than the analysis of the sole syntax, this brief paper shall focus on the pragmatic analysis of the 'speech' (Adornetti 2013, p. 44);
- b. inferring and isolating the key concepts which describe the interactional type of the Japanese interview without imposing them *a priori* through a top-down mode, as 'other' or 'unique' characteristics of the language in question. As already suggested by Balboni through the metaphor of the carafe of Baxtin (Balboni, Caon 2015) and later by Fele (2007, p. 89), although the basic structures of conversation relate to the fundamental mechanisms of interaction among people, the cultural and linguistic variables contribute to identify otherwise the same type in the different languacultures. To investigate the latter, it will be necessary to mention the Japanese scholars who, from an internal perspective, can and should necessarily enrich the discussion. In particular, this paper shall analyse the proposals for the classification and analysis of the feedback (*aizuchi*, in Japanese) resulting from the studies of Horiguchi (1988), Machida and Katō (2004), Okamoto (2008) and Sawano (2008);
- c. stimulating an holistic reflection which goes beyond the sole analysis of the language in order to understand the iconic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic aspects of communication. This aims at raising awareness in learners that communicative competence is always enriched by the mimicry, gestures and prosodic features of the language (Pavone 2003, p. 19). In particular gesture, respect to words, has its strong objectivity, especially when the conventional gesture lies within the context of specific social and cultural models (Tassan 2005, p. 29).

## 2 The Television Interview

According to the *conversation analysis* literature, the dialogue in television interviews falls into a conversation typology which is called 'institutional', where 'institutional' means a dialogue in which the mechanism of alternation of speakers is substantially modified (Fele 2007 p. 100). In fact, the turn-taking model in interviews is made of multiple units, which do not necessarily culminate with the rotation of the turns: this happens both for the interviewer, who can introduce his questions through statements/preliminary narrations, and for the interviewee, who can wait for the completion of the question, or answer according to extended turns during which the interviewer does not intervene. According to the studies of Heritage (1998) and Heritage and Greatbatch (1991), in this particular type of interaction, both the contents and the turn-taking are often organized *a priori* in an explicit and predictable way which leads to an intimate cooperation between the speakers for the construction of the dialogue,<sup>2</sup> as well as to an easy identification of any possible deviation from the interactive model. Not surprisingly, as Bazzanella states (1994, p. 212), in the dialogue typology, negotiations involve not only the meaning, but rather the relationship itself between speakers (also 'co-authors') in a process of constant co-construction which mingles conversational and social roles.

Despite the above appearance of intimacy, the main addressee/beneficiary of this interactive type is the television audience instead of the interviewer, who rather plays a dual role as a catalyst as he has to: i) provide a framework in which the interviewee can convey useful information and opinions; ii) challenge and/or put pressure on the interviewee based on his own statements (Heritage 1998, p.15). As a result, therefore, given the need to assign these roles to the participants, the asymmetry between speakers represents the main element of the interview. In fact, as shown by Fele (2007), just like in physician-patient interactions, in the interview the relevance of the sequences based on adjacent pairs (question/answer) determines and asymmetrically binds the participation format. Therefore, the demonstration of attention to the interview also leads to a 'deference' reminding of the social organization of the interaction and, in particular, of the structural characteristics of the conversation itself (Fele 2007, p. 105). Locally, such deference, as already suggested in earlier studies for the analysis of two different interview types in Japanese (Vitucci 2015), can be detected both at a sociopragmatic level in the analysis of the diaphasic

2 These statements are in contrast with the earlier studies of Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson (1974) in which the principle of the *unpredictability* of the conversation is stated. Conversely, in his following essays, Schegloff (1991), focusing on institutional interactions, highlights how relevance, procedural consequentiality of the institutional context, as well as the roles, goals and identity of the speakers are directly reflected in the development of the interaction itself.



variation of the language,<sup>3</sup> and at a paraverbal and extraverbal level, in the examination of the semantics of the body and of the prosodic features of the language. In addition to *asymmetry*, however, it is possible to identify other local factors able to describe more accurately the characteristics of the Japanese television interview. Far from stereotyping the following concepts or regarding them as the sole constituents of that type of dialogue, at a purely educational and cultural level they can be summarized in the following points, evaluating each time their validity through the analysis of the audiovisual materials considered: i) *circularity*: that is, the ability to gradually construct the meaning through the successive preparatory formulations of the concepts progressively involved (Balboni, Caon 2015; Okamoto 2008); ii) *cooperativeness*:<sup>4</sup> namely, the ability to build the dialogue (Bazzanella 1994; Markus, Kitayama 1991) with a mutual use of 'emotional' feedbacks (Sawano 2008; Machida, Katō 2004) and by means of superimpositions not perceived as an 'invasion' or 'corruption' of the turns of speech (Heritage 1998); iii) *evocativeness*, that is the ability to recall concepts and images belonging to one's languaculture through an interaction at times syntactically limited, but with an important involvement of paraverbal and extraverbal aspects (Tassan 2005; Okamoto 2008; Vitucci 2014a).

## 2.1 First Video: the Interview with the Singer Hirai Ken



Figure 1. Setting of the interview with the singer Hirai Ken

The first video examined in this study refers to a two-minute interview released during a morning talk show by the Japanese pop singer Hi-

3 This refers to the so-called *sociopragmatic attention*, i.e. the ability to carefully select the language registers (mainly *futsūgo*, *sonkeigo*, *teineigo*) with respect to the setting of the conversations, their participants and the type of interaction according to the typical Japanese politeness (Kádár, Mills 2011.)

4 Not to be confused with the *cooperation* principle developed by Paul Grice (1989).

rai Ken in 2010, available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trRjMXSdFYQ>. Below, the contextual elements are briefly outlined (Bazzanella 1994), and then the specific content is analysed:

- a. the people participating in the interview are three: the singer (H), an anchorman (I1) and an anchorwoman (I2); the dialogue revolves around H's typical day;
- b. the setting of the interview is a television studio, where the participants are sitting on three stools next to the anchorwoman surrounded by the two men. All the speakers are facing the cameras even if they try to form a semicircle to establish a proper eye contact during the interview. Although the two interviewers are wearing formal clothes according to the Japanese etiquette (the anchorman is rather elegant, while the anchorwoman is wearing a classic-sport suit), the casual style of the guest suggests a relaxed and informal atmosphere typical of the morning TV talk shows end (Fig. 1);
- c. the sociolinguistic interaction among the participants during the interview reveals the use of a very informal linguistic register without any diaphasic incursions in morphosyntactic structures typical of the honorific language (*sonkeigo*), but rather a repeated use of the polite form (*teineigo*) by all the participants,<sup>5</sup> as well as some traits of the common register (*futsūgo*).<sup>6</sup> At a diastratic level, the use of loanwords, called *gairaigo*, (Jinnouchi 2007; Vitucci 2014a) is rather peculiar and absolutely 'non-conventional' (Van Compernelle 2014); loanwords were first used by the interviewee to evoke a luxurious and exclusive lifestyle, but later extended to all the participants who gave life to an interesting dialogue in cheerful and easy-going tones.<sup>7</sup>

As already reported in the previous section, in this interview the asymmetry of the dialogue (Fele 2007) is first seen in the organization of the questions, which follows a 'general → particular' structure starting from

5 This is evidenced by the recurring use of the *-ndesuka* copula following verbs in plain form in the questions asked by the interviewers, and the use of the *-masu* verbal ending and the *-desu* copula in the answers of the interviewee.

6 The use of *futsūgo* is evident in the abbreviated verbal suffix *-chatta* instead of *-te shimai-mashita* chosen in the monologues by the interviewee (*iucchatta*), or adverbial abbreviations such as, for example, *yappa* instead of *yappari* used by the interviewer.

7 The *gairaigo* used are all based on English: *sansetto taimu* (sunset time), *shanpan* (champagne), *dorinkingu shanpan* (drinking champagne), *sansetto shanpan* (sunset champagne), *afutā sansetto taimu* (after sunset time), *ribā saido* (river side), *opun cafe* (open cafe), *samā taimu* (summer time), *Tama ribā* (Tama river). It is also worth mentioning the use of the wordplay: *kaki gentei opun* (open only in summer) (term resulting from the hybridization of the Japanese word *kaki gentei* with the English loan word *open*).

the main question by I1 (*yasumi no hi tte Hirai san, nani o suru ndesuka?*<sup>8</sup>), completed with several questions by both I1 and I2 aimed at soliciting further information from the speaker during the narration (*Asa kara inshu?*; *Hirai san wa nani o nomu ndesuka?*; *Hirai Ken san wa ippai shaberu ndesuka?*; *Mou ippai ippai janai desuka?*<sup>9</sup>) Therefore, the role of 'catalysts' performed by the two interviewers (Heritage 1998) and that of 'information source' played by the interviewee are here well defined from a social point of view during the interview. The above elicitation process of the information can be easily observed through the presence of numerous sentences spoken by the interviewers with the purpose of suggesting any content and/or element for the completion of the guest's narration: these cues, in fact, are not aimed at hindering the narration, and do not represent any turn shift (Fele 2007, p. 39). Not surprisingly, the interviewee willingly accepts these suggestions through consent feedbacks (*sō desu ne, uhm*), repetitions or synonyms and continues his narration. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the following passage:

I2 (1): asa kara [inshu?

H (1): [yaya!

H (2): >asa kara janai desu ne<

I2 (2): asa wa yukkuri nete

H (3): sō desu ne, mah (0.1) hiru gurai mae nete (0.2) de, mah (0.1) jimu ittari [shite

I1 (1): [ha:::=

I1 (2): =ah, yappa, ase ga kaite=

H (4): =uhm, sō desu ne (0.1)

H (5): [karada o ugokashite (0.2)

I1 (3): [uhm

I2 (3): [kitaetari toka shite=

H (6): kitaetari toka shite (0.1)

8 Translation: «Mr Hirai, what do you usually do in your days off?»

9 Translation: «Do you start drinking in the morning?»; «Mr Hirai, what do you (usually) drink?»; «Mr Hirai, do you usually speak (when you drink)?»; «Aren't you too excited?».

In the above passage, after the H (2) sentence *asa kara janai desu ne*<sup>10</sup> intended to reject the previous statement, the I2 anchorwoman gives the interviewee a cue, thus asking him to describe his typical day: the I2 (2) sentence *asa wa yukkuri nete*, where the interviewee is supposed to have a very slow awakening in the morning. The interviewee at first accepts this proposal with a confirmation feedback (*sō desu ne*). Subsequently, in the H (3) sentence, he continues his narration by adding further information (*mah, hiru gurai mae nete de, mah, jimu ittari shite*<sup>11</sup>) and, once he has finished his narration, I1 immediately adds another suggestion (*ah, yappa, ase ga kaite*<sup>12</sup>). This suggestion is accepted like the first one. In fact, H introduces a verb which is almost a synonym of the previous one to confirm the validity of H (5) (*karada o ugokashite*<sup>13</sup>), simultaneously followed by the umpteenth suggestion of I2 in the I2 (3) sentence, where another verb relating to the previous one is introduced (*kitaetari toka shite*). At this point, in H (6), the interviewee, almost amused, accepts once again the last suggestion by repeating I2 (3) sentence and continues his narration. From an emic perspective, the above passage of the interview sheds light on how the inference/intuition process plays a crucial pragmatic role in content management because, as Fele also suggests (2007, p. 27), it shows how the temporal and qualitative development of the conversation is based on the expectation of a social interaction relying on the specific circumstances and identity of the speakers in a given time.

As evidenced by the above extract, the feedbacks also play a key role in the co-construction of the dialogue, thus confirming both the *circularity* (Balboni, Caon 2015) and the *cooperativeness* principle (Bazzanella 1994) through emotional responses (Okamoto 2008) as well as not corruptive superimposition of the turns of speech. The careful management of back channels, in fact, confirms the so-called *interdependent self-conception*, which clearly shows how the social attention typical of the dialogue aims at maintaining the face both of the speaker and of the interlocutor, identifying the speakers as 'cooperative speakers' (Markus, Kitayama 1991). This cooperativeness is also evidenced by the frequent use by the interviewee of reformulations, waffles or hesitation (*mah, ano::, chotto, hontōni, kō, demo nanka mō*) or verbs in the suspensive form pronounced with a falling prosodic pitch immediately followed by a pause (*shite, ugokashite, nonde*), designed to highlight the temporal awareness of H in the management of his narration towards his interlocutors.

10 Translation: «No, not in the morning!»

11 Translation: «Yes, exactly. But, I usually sleep until noon and then, well, I go to the gym».

12 Translation: «Then you sweat (at the gym)».

13 Translation: «Do some exercise».

As indicated by Sawano (2008), in Japanese conversation about fifteen to twenty feedbacks (*aizuchi*) per minute are expressed, not only in a two-speaker conversation. The reason for these recurring phenomena, according to Machida and Katō (2004), is to be found mainly in the lack of eye contact and the resulting necessity to prove one's attention to the other party.<sup>14</sup> Horiguchi (1988) summarizes the types of *aizuchi* as follows: 1. *aizuchi* aimed at pointing out the attention to the other party (*hai, ee, uhm*); 2. *aizuchi* reporting understanding and agreement with the contents of the conversation (*sono toori desu, sō desu ne, sore wa iemasu ne, naruhodo*); 3. *aizuchi* indicating disagreement (*iie, ie, iya*); 4. *aizuchi* denoting amazement/confusion regarding the contents exposed (ex. *eh?, ha?, hontō?, hontō desuka?, ara!*) and 5. *aizuchi* aimed at asking for additional information (*to iu to?, to osshaimasu to?, dō iu imi?*). The analysis of this interview, however, shows that even the repetitions and reformulations can be considered valid feedback strategies falling into both the first and the second type suggested by Horiguchi, as useful tools at the disposal of the speakers to prove their attention or consent. Similarly, further questions or clarifications, expressed in some specific moments of the interview, can solicit new informations, thus falling into the fifth group of *aizuchi* described above. In this regard, as also stressed by Adornetti quoting the theories of Grice, in order to carry out an effective pragmatic analysis, it is necessary to distinguish the literal meaning of the expressions being studied from the one expressed by the speakers, namely the meaning with which they use them: the first one corresponds to the linguistically encoded meaning; the second one, conversely, refers to what the speaker wants to say, that is the message that he wants to convey to the other party (Adornetti 2013, pp. 47-48). On the basis of these assumptions and using Horiguchi's original framework (1988) the following integrated subdivision of the back channels is proposed, according to the analysis of the interview reported in this section (Table 1, Fig. 2):

<sup>14</sup> Not surprisingly, the *aizuchi* are frequent even in telephone conversations where there is no visual contact between speakers. In the above-mentioned case, the lack of these signals may lead the other person to suspect a decline of attention, or even the physical absence of the other person (Machida, Katō 2004, p. 128).

Table 1. List and subdivision of feedbacks according to Horiguchi's integrated classification (according to the Jefferson system of transcription)

Speakers	Feedback	1	2	3	4	5
HIRAI (H)	15	2 - <i>uhm</i> - <i>ee::</i>	11 - <i>sō desu ne (x2)</i> - <i>ii desu yo ne</i> - <i>hiru gurai mae nete</i> <b>(repetition)</b> - <i>karada o ugokashite</i> <b>(synonym)</b> - <i>kitaeri toka shite</i> <b>(repetition)</b> - <i>afutā sansetto taimu</i> <b>(repetition)</b> - <i>samā taimu</i> <b>(repetition)</b> - <i>Tama river</i> <b>(repetition in English)</b> - <i>nankusettare</i> <b>(repetition)</b>	2 - <i>yaya!</i> - <i>asa kara janai</i> - <i>desu ne</i> <b>(clarification)</b>	0	0
Interviewer 1 (I1)	18	3 - <i>ha::</i> - <i>uhm</i> - <i>ee::</i>	4 - <i>yappa, ase ga kaite</i> <b>(synonym)</b> - <i>ah, opun café</i> <b>(repetition)</b> - <i>ne::</i> - <i>shanpan ne</i> <b>(repetition)</b>	0	6 - <i>uh::m!</i> - <i>he::!</i> - <i>he::</i> - <i>shanpan ne, sokka!</i> - <i>aa::</i> - <i>nankusettare</i> <b>(repetition)</b>	5 - <i>ippai ippai janai desuka?</i> - <i>Hirai san, nani nomu ndesuka?</i> - <i>Osake wa bīru, wain?</i> - <i>You to dō naru ndesuka?</i> - <i>Ippai shaberu ndesuka?</i>

Interviewer 2 (I2)	22	4 - hai - uhm - uh::m - shanpa::n (repetition)	3 - kitetari toka shite (synonym) - ah, ii desu ne - ne:::	0	11 - ha? - uhm::! - inshu? (repetition) - ah! suteki! - oo::, sore wa! - he::! - ah! takusan arunda! (remark) - tsuyoi no! (remark) - mawari no kata ni? (counterquestion) - ne::! - okashi::ne::!	4 - asa kara inshu? - de sono ga doko ni iku ndesuka? - afutā sansetto taimu (specification) - Tama ribā no hō wa (specification)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>

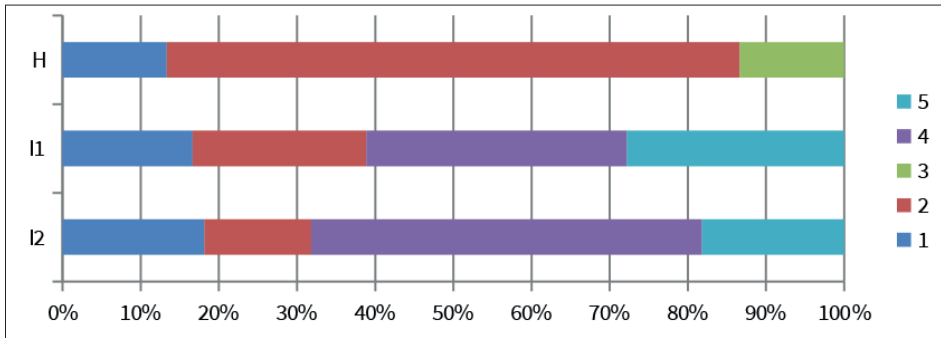


Figure 2. Feedback frequency per speaker during the interview with Hirai Ken

As shown by Table 1 and Fig. 2, the asymmetry of the interview and the resulting roles lead H to provide feedbacks essentially belonging to the first and second type of *aizuchi*, with a percentage of 86% indicative of the level of attentiveness of the interviewee to the suggestions gradually proposed by two interviewers, the *circularity* of the narration management (progressive co-construction of the story through signs of agreement) and the high degree of *evocativeness* due to the numerous exophoric references (*hiru gurai mae nete, karada o ugokashite, kitaeri toka shite*) used by the interviewee through this type of back channels (Adornetti 2013, p. 64). Conversely, although in H's sentences there are feedbacks belonging to the third type and indicating disagreement, in the specific context of the interview they represent only an accidental event, completely absent in the sentences of I1 and I2. These attitudes are certainly indicative of

a high degree of mutual cooperativeness between speakers, which – at a sociopragmatic level – often reveals itself through the Japanese respectful habit of not openly contradicting the other party according to his/her social position (*tachiba*, in Japanese<sup>15</sup>). Such mutual social attentiveness is also confirmed by the percentage of the same agreement/understanding feedback expressed by the interviewers, respectively accounting for 38% for I1 and 32% for I2, with a total of 70% for the sole interviewers.

Focusing instead on the behaviour of the two interviewers (I1, I2), it is interesting to observe how the feedbacks of the fourth and fifth type (stupor and elicitation) represent the largest part of their respective interventions, accounting for 62% for I1 and reaching 68% for the anchorwoman (I2), while they are completely absent in speech of H. Assuming the role of ‘catalysts’ (Heritage 1998) played by I1 and I2 during the interview, it is certainly interesting to mention their different approach. The feedbacks indicating astonishment are mainly used by I2 (50%), while I1 shows a much lower percentage (35%). The most striking element, however, is the quality of this type of intervention: besides the typical Japanese exclamations of amazement (*ha?*, *uhm:::!*, *ne:::!*, *okashi::ne::!*, *ah! suteki!*, *hee:::!*) I2 communicates her involvement even through the repetition of parts of the interviewee’s narration (*inshu?*), counterquestions (*mawari no kata ni?*), or remark feedbacks (*ah! takusan arunda!*, *tsuyoi no!*). I1, conversely, mainly intervenes with a single type of *aizuchi* indicating amazement (*uh:::m!*, *he:::!*, *he:::*) giving priority to his role of anchorman. Not surprisingly, he has the highest percentage of eliciting interventions (27%) including questions (*Ippai ippai janai desuka?*, *Hirai san, nani nomu ndesuka?*, *Osake wa biru, wain?*, *You to dō naru ndesuka?*, *Ippai shaberu ndesuka?*), while I2 solicits fewer information (18%) asking some questions, but also making some observations pertaining to the content of the guest’s speech (*afutā sansetto taimu, Tama ribā no hō wa...*).

At the diastatic and sociopragmatic level, the most peculiar aspect of this video is certainly represented by the repeated use of loanwords (*gairaigo*) by the interviewee with a hilarious effect. Interestingly, in fact, the reaction to the ‘exotic’ story of H helps create a more informal and less ‘structured’ context in terms of turn-taking system (Heritage 1998; Fele 2007), due to its greater evocativeness. From an extraverbal point of view, this is further evidenced by the use of kinetographic gestures (Tassan 2005, pp. 46-47) in conjunction with the use of loanwords mimicking the act of drinking champagne (an open hand which rotates forward and backward as if it is holding a big glass); iconographic gestures, such as two hands moving away from each other with the palm upwards to indicate the river side (*ribā saido*); or intensifying gestures, such as two hands

15 For a study on politeness, see Kádár and Mills (2011).



rotating forward with their back facing the other person to strengthen the meaning of the Japanese adjective *horoyoi* (drunk) and the two hands with the palms facing each other moving upward to intensify the meaning of the onomatopoeic *ga* indicating dynamism/resolution or to draw the attention to certain terms (*opun cafè*, *samā taimu*, *Tamagawa*, *Tama river*). Finally, it is also worth mentioning the two hands moving backward to the left with the palms forward to help convey the meaning of the verb *modoru* (come back). Interestingly, in addition to gestures, when the interviewee deepens these terms, he alternates eye contact with his interlocutors and visual isolation, directing his gaze upwards in front of him in order to call to mind the concepts that he wants to express.

As already mentioned, the implicit aim of the whole narration of H seems to be his intention to involve the interlocutors in the most private aspects of his life as a pop star, trying to surprise them with his refined habits. Not surprisingly, from a sociolinguistic perspective, the use of loanwords like *sansetto taimu*, *shanpan*, *ribā saido*, *opun cafè*, *samā taimu*, *Tama ribā*, *sansetto shanpan*; *gairaigo* syntactic constructs (*dorinkingu shanpan*); and English terms (*Tama river*) denotes not only a clear translation strategy aimed at improving mutual complicity between the speakers, but also a kind of *import* (*hakuraisei*) which can be detected in the so-called *hōsekibako kōka* or *casetto kōka* phenomenon, that is an attractive expectation encouraging the use of some terms regardless of the actual understanding by the users (Vitucci 2014a, p. 100). From an interactional point of view, this is clearly evidenced by the reactions of the two interviewers to the use of loanwords, which mainly consist of laughter, repetitions of the terms, suggestions of additional loanwords or, as already mentioned, astonishment.

## 2.2 Second Video: the interview-narration with the singer Tokunaga Hideaki



Figure 3. Setting of the interview with the singer Tokunaga Hideaki

The second video examined is taken from a passage of a three-minute interview during a night talk show (ARTiST) in 2013 with the Japanese pop singer Hideaki Tokunaga available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1iE1z2pp6U>). Below, the contextual elements are reported (Bazzanella 1994):

- a. the participants in the interview are two: the singer (T) and the anchorwoman (I); the main theme of the dialogue revolves around the decision of H to take up a career in music and then the narration of an episode when he was bullied in the junior high school;
- b. the setting of the interview is a television studio where the participants are sitting side by side at a table sipping some drinks. Unlike the previous interview, in order to establish a large eye contact, the two speakers are directly facing each other. As for clothing style, the anchorwoman is wearing an elegant light dress, while, this time, the interviewee is wearing a dark suit (Fig. 1);
- c. the type of sociolinguistic interaction between the participants during the interview reveals the use of a linguistic register rather hybrid and 'non-conventional' (Van Compernelle 2014), characterised by constant shifts from the polite (*teineigo*) to the plain form (*futsūgo*) by the interviewee, as well as by constant incursions in the plain register by the interviewer: from a sociopragmatic perspective, it is clear that the dialogue appears reversed, as the two interlocutors belong to the entertainment world (Kádár, Mills 2011, p. 155).<sup>16</sup> At a diastatic level, however, the presence of *gairaigo* is less marked:

<sup>16</sup> As suggested by Kádár, Mills (2011, p. 157) in their theory of Japanese social status (*tachiba*): «*tachiba* essentially refers to one's roles in social interactions, or 'social selves'. People change their behaviour according to where they are situated, who they are interact-

in fact, the use of loanwords such as adjectives (*pojitibusugiru*, *negatibu*, *burakku*) and nouns (*hōru*, *tonneru*, *heddorokku*, *chin*, *heddorokkugoshi*) is noted, but they always merge with the narration without any hilarious connotation, unlike the previous example.

The most striking feature of this video is definitely a marked asymmetry in the dialogue between the two speakers: in fact, starting from a general question (*nande kashu ni naru to omotta ndesuka?*<sup>17</sup>), in the first phase of the interview, I solicits information only on two occasions (*donna koe datta ndesuka?*; *ojisanppoi koe toka?*<sup>18</sup>) gradually moving towards a true listening of the story of T and progressively leading to personal mutual confess: due to this shift, I gradually loses her role of catalyst during the interview (Heritage 1998), conferring on T the task of managing the contents and emotionally placing herself at the same level of his interlocutor, thus causing the diaphasic shift mentioned above. In this regard, owing to the lack of elicitation dynamics, the aforesaid video is different from the previous one in terms of cooperativeness, as in the first video the 'suggestion-acceptance' dialectic model between the speakers was present to a greater extent (Fele 2007). In fact, as shown later below, the cooperativeness principle reveals itself in this interview through the repeated use of attentiveness and understanding feedbacks by I towards the other party (Horiguchi 1998), as well as the mutual construction of the story by both speakers (Bazzanella 1994).

For the purpose of intercultural pragmatic learning, it is interesting to observe how the local stylistic elements contained in the above video (Balboni 2012) seem to question the global scheme (template) of the interview so as to produce a 'social structure' which represents the practical achievement of the speakers' goals (Fele 2007, p. 116). In fact, it is possible to notice the shift from the interactional model of the interview to that of typical narration, where the asymmetric structure of the dialogue is reduced, but the elements of circularity, cooperativeness and evocativeness are confirmed together with the frequent use of back channels (*aizuchi*) in a way that redefines the role of the speakers. Indeed, as Liddicoat states:

Stories in conversation [...] occur during interaction and their telling is accomplished collaboratively by the participants in the conversation. This means that the telling of a story is not simply the act of a speaker narrator, but also the act of a story recipient. (Liddicoat 2007, p. 279)

ing with, and how they perceive themselves in a given situation. It is as if one has multiple social selves or identities, and one presents different selves in different situations».

17 Translation: «Why did you decide to become a singer?».

18 Translation: «What kind of voice was that?»; «Was it the typical voice of a middle-aged man?».

The narration of a story, then, looks like a unique example of expanded sequences with an internal discursive consistency developing through several adjacent turns. This is evidenced by the very first sentences:

I (1): ...nande kashu ni naru to omotta ndesuka?

T (1): chūgakkō n ninen no toki ne ↑

I (2): hai=

T (2):= omae wa (0.5) <shōrai, kashu ni naru ndayo tte iu> (0.2)koe o  
(0.5) kiite

I (3): hai=

T (3): =sore de (0.2) ha::: sō nanda::tte iutte kashu mezashita nda.<sup>19</sup>

To the I (1) sentence, which contains the main question, T responds without proposing any answer, but rather introducing his story as a knee-jerk reaction to the question without any introduction strategy. I, recovering her role of 'recipient' of the story, emotionally puts herself in a position of verifiable listening in the I (2) and I (3) sentences through the use of two consent feedbacks (*hai*). This behaviour allows T to create his own story by dividing it into several adjacent turns<sup>20</sup> and I to intervene without interrupting the narrative flow of her interlocutor. In fact, the following questions only aim at soliciting further details of the story (*donna koe datta ndesuka?*; *ojisanppoi koe toka?*), thus confirming the mutual cooperation in the creation of the dialogue as well as the willingness to listen. The peculiar feature of this video is, however, the emotional superimposition of the roles starting from the T (10) sentence, where T talks about school bullying.

19 Translation of T(1), T(2), T(3): «During the second year of the junior high school, I heard a voice telling me that I would become a singer. At the time I pondered what I had heard and that is why I decided to take up this career».

20 Liddicoat (2007), in this regard, stresses how the two main moments of a story are often identifiable in the so-called background (useful for the construction of the story which simply suspend the turn shift) and in the climax (a passage which completes both the story and the speaker's turn.)

T (10): (0.2) sore wa chūgakkō no toki ni (0.2) jibun ga Fukuoka kara (.)  
ano:: (0.1)Itami ni kite (0.2)kansaiben shaberenaide, chotto ↑ ijime  
ni atta koto ga atta [ndesuyo. ↓<sup>21</sup>

I (9): [ha::=

I (10): =watashi mo atta, atta.<sup>22</sup>

Here I emotionally responds to the new story sharing it in two different ways: first, by expressing her astonishment (*ha::*) in I (9) and, later, by saying to the other party that she had the same experience, even unconsciously repeating the verb twice (*watashi mo atta, atta*). From this moment, it is interesting to note how T divides his narration in several turns, in direct eye contact with the other person, conferring to his narration a certain circularity (Balboni, Caon 2015) which allows him to gradually achieve the climax of the story. This, however, helps create an intimacy<sup>23</sup> and an expectation on the part of T which lead to a reversal of roles in the I (11) sentence, where I takes part in the narration temporarily acting as a narrator instead of a recipient:

I (11): suteki da na::::(0.1) watashi wa zenzen ijimerareta toki [ni  
T (11): [uh::m

I (12):(0.5) >zutto kono mama ijimerareru nda to omotteta [ndesu<  
T (12): [uh::m

I (13):ima (0.5) jibun ga kō iu sono toki ni >modoreru nara<iutte agetai  
ne(0.2) tonneru de atte kō (0.1) zutto *burakku hōru* janakute (0.2)  
sono ijime mo zutto (.) tsuzuku wake (0.1) janai ndayo yutte ageta...i  
kedo [ne.

T (13): [he::

I (14):son toki wa kikoenakatta koe wa<sup>24</sup>=

21 Translation of T(10): «During the junior high school, I moved from Fukuoka to Itami. I was not able to speak the Kansai dialect, therefore I was victim of mild bullying».

22 Translation: «I had the same experience !».

23 In a *vis-à-vis* relation, the success of the communication also depends on eye contact. According to the study on body semantics, it would be appropriate to maintain eye contact with the other party for at least 70% of the whole communication (Tassan 2005, p. 74).

24 Translation of I (11), (12), (13), (14): «What a beautiful story. When I was bullied, I thought that I had to endure it forever. Today, if I could go back to those days, I wish I could say to myself that this is not a tunnel, a black hole, a bullying from which there is no escape. Not at all! But I, unlike you, did not hear any voice».

T (14):=demo (0.2) *hontō ore mo >dakara< chūgakkō ichinen no toki ni*  
 (0.2) *kurasu no nanninka kara kō* (0.5) *ijimerareta* (0.5) *dakedo* (0.5)  
*kō nanka se mo >chicchakatta nde<* (0.5) *heddorokku sarete* (0.2)  
*demo mō nare, narekko ni nacchattete* [sa<sup>25</sup>

I (15): [uhm

The behaviour of I seems to contravene the typical interactional development of the story, which normally leads to the 'suspension' of the recipient's turns until the climax (Fele 2007, p. 74). Moreover, in the above passage, there are some interesting pragmatic phenomena: in fact, in addition to the already mentioned exchange of roles starting from the I (11) sentence, at a sociopragmatic level, it is worth mentioning the diaphasic shift through the intimate story, resulting in a register shift from the polite (*teineigo*) to the plain form (*futsūgo*) for both speakers. This emotional change is traceable from the I (13) sentence, where the interviewer uses for the first time the suffix *kedo ne*<sup>26</sup> and, subsequently, in the final T (14) sentence, where the guest clearly chooses the plain version of the verb in the suspension form in his colloquial register (*nacchattete*) followed by the suffix *-sa*<sup>27</sup> as well as an intimate and confidential tone. In the same sentence, however, in terms of interactions and turn management, it is possible to notice another role change introduced by T through the use of the conjunction *dakara* (informal) that draws, in this context, the attention of his interlocutor to his previous contents. Not surprisingly, the story resumes from the aforementioned experience of bullying thus intending to rearrange the turn-taking system and the following adjacent pairs (Bazzanella 1994) within a dialogue dynamics typical of the story where T is the narrator and I automatically acts once again as the recipient of the story (Liddicoat 2007). This change of roles is also evidenced by both the verbal feedbacks provided by I (*uhm, uh::m hai, hai hai, hai ↑, he:::, ne:::, arimasu ne*), and, at a non-verbal level, by her head movements indicating her consent.

Just like in the first video, it is interesting to analyse the composition of the feedbacks of this sample through the scheme integrated with Horiguchi's model (1988). As shown in Fig. 4, although with a lower frequency within the conversation, the feedbacks of T are mostly (72%) represented by *aizuchi* transmitting attentiveness (*uh::m, he:::*), or responses indicating

25 Translation of T (14): «But, to be honest, as I mentioned before, during the first year of junior high school, I was bullied too. I was also small and my school mates used to press my neck with their arms. I was somehow accustomed to that treatment».

26 The suffix *-kedo* is used here in a contrastive sense (but, in truth, however.) The expression *-ne* is used instead to solicit empathy with the interlocutor in a more informal manner.

27 Translation: «You know?»; «Do you understand?».

comprehension (*uhm*), while there are no reactions of astonishment. This is because the speaker feels involved in his role first of interviewee and, later, of narrator when he reports his bullying experience, thus altering, as already mentioned, the rhythm and template of the interview (Balboni 2012). On the other side, the subdivision of the feedbacks of I looks richer and more balanced, with 89% of the *aizuchi* indicating attentiveness, understanding and wonder (*hai, uhm, ha:::, desu ne, he::?, ha:::, he::: ↑, he::: sō nan desuka?, hontō desuka?, hie:::, ne::: ↑*). In this regard, it is interesting to notice that these responses almost always hold the second position in pairs of sentences containing some elements of the stories of T. These feedbacks, as already mentioned, emotionally help the speaker without interrupting the verbal flow (Okamoto 2008) together with responses indicating remarks (*ja, kekkō...*<sup>28</sup>) or evaluation (*suteki da na, ii hanashi da na::* .<sup>29</sup>) Subsequently, the remaining 11% of the feedbacks of I is intended for elicitation in the form of questions which, from the perspective of the dialogue, should be connected with both her role as interviewer and with the deference resulting from the social organization of the interaction (Fele 2007). Nevertheless, unlike in the first video, there is a sharp decline of the eliciting interventions with respect to the previous interview (-16% compared to I1, -7% compared to I2) probably caused by the hybridization of the interview with the narration, thus leading I to lose her 'catalyst' role (Heritage 1998).

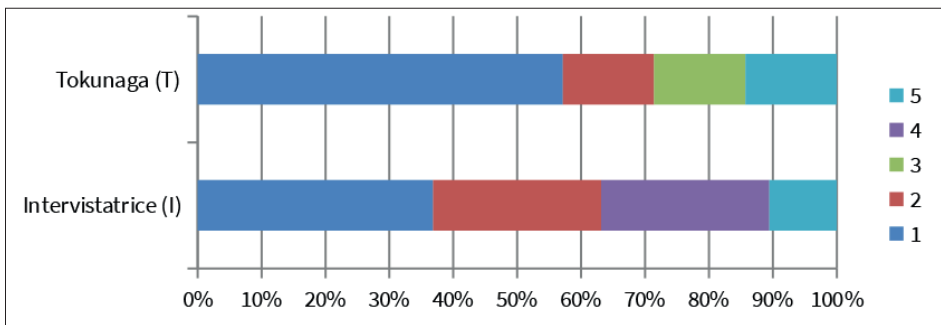


Figure 4. Frequency of the feedback per speaker in the interview with Tokunaga Hideaki

Despite the slight asymmetry, the degree of intimacy and sharing between the speakers through the narration is also evidenced by extraverbal elements which help the presentation of the content. This aspect is particularly evident in T and to a lesser extent in I, when she tries to take part

28 Translation: «So, then...».

29 Translation: «Wonderful!»; «What a beautiful story!».

in the narration playing the role of narrator. In particular, the gesture analysis (Pavone 2003) reveals an increase in signals which is temporarily accompanied by the diaphasic shift in the language register. Therefore it could be assumed for the first video the following equivalence: + intimacy = + gestures = + sociopragmatic informality = + evocativeness. In fact, through an in-depth analysis of the gestures in the aforementioned video, it is possible to notice how - from an initial closed posture with arms tight around the bust for T and hands folded on the table for I - the interaction gradually evolves towards a more marked use of the hands (the lower parts of the body are irrelevant because the speakers are seated). Not surprisingly, in conjunction with the I (13) sentence and more specifically with the verbal construct *iutte agetai* (I wish I could say), the interviewer mimics the gesture of throwing an object in front of her with her right hand by using an iconographic signal (Tassan 2005). Similarly, continuing the narration and in conjunction with the expressions *burakku hōru* and *tonneru* in the same sentence, the woman turns the palms towards each other moving her hands forward describing the shape of a tunnel, thus using again an iconographic intensifying signal. Once the story gets more intimate, T seems to respond to the behaviour of the interlocutor increasing his gestures as well: in the T (14) sentence - using the noun *narekko* (boy accustomed to) - he turns his hands forward mimicking the movement of an object that rolls or, perhaps, of a spinning wheel; later, in the following sentences, he mimics the gesture of being grabbed by the neck with the term *heddorokkugoshi* (grab by the neck), as well as a punch in conjunction with the verb *nagutta* (I beat him). From a psychological-spatial perspective, the description of the proposition *kare ga nakihajimeta* (He began to cry) - described at a non-verbal level with an iconographic gesture of his hand which moves away from the body of the speaker towards the space immediately in front of him - is particularly interesting. This movement clearly shows the outer space (*soto* in Japanese) as opposed to the inner space (*uchi*), as well as the psychological distance associated with the use of personal pronouns in the third person, such as *kare* ('he' in Japanese, Suzuki 2006.) Finally, it is interesting to observe how the same T also uses indicative deictic signals (Tassan 2005, p. 44) indicating the other party with his left hand in conjunction with the verbal construct *iwareta yōni* (As you mentioned before).

### 3 Conclusions

As suggested at the beginning of this study, teaching the pragmatics of a foreign language is not an easy task. This inherent difficulty is justified by the inevitable divergence between the concept of 'culture' as a category *a priori* (Bettoni 2006, p. 234) and the actual sociocultural skills of foreign learners. However, although many scholars agree upon the impossibility



of systematically teaching intercultural pragmatics, this study shows how the analysis of intracultural audiovisual materials can lead to a change of pace in terms of both learning methods and teaching strategies. This happens primarily because the network introduces a new concept of 'culture', which far from being a mere 'archive' sedimented over time, today acts as a reality increasingly permeable at global level thanks to the circulation of audiovisual materials on the Internet. As Balboni stresses (2015):

the speed of the international exchanges which bring people and television images around the world makes the interchange of cultural models and the models of intercultural communication extremely fluid, constant, unstoppable and indescribable in real time. (Balboni, Caon 2015, p. 146)

It is evident how the above-mentioned fluidity with which the audiovisual materials circulate all over the world offers students the opportunity not only to objectively observe the performance of communication genres at a local level, but also to start an *awareness-knowledge-skills* three-phase process (Balboni 2012) based on a formative observation through the concept of 'learning by simulation' (Vitucci 2013, p. 69). In particular, this study focuses on the television interview in order to shed light not only on its basic structural level (template), but also on the pragmatic peculiarities resulting from the Japanese languaculture. First, it is interesting to notice how the two videos proposed here show two different interactive management procedures so that they cannot be easily categorized, or regarded as unique reference models for pragmatic interactions in Japanese.<sup>30</sup> Not surprisingly, although the first interview is characterised by a more asymmetrical and cooperative communication, the second video features fewer asymmetry due to an evident hybridization of the interview with the narration (Liddicoat 2007; Fele 2007) resulting in the rearrangement of the speakers' roles. This divergence is also confirmed by the qualitative analysis of the feedbacks which, for example, shows a cumulative percentage of eliciting interventions (Horiguchi 1988) equal to 45% for the interviewers of the first video, against only 11% for the second interviewer.

As already suggested above, for the purposes of intercultural teaching, if some constitutive elements of the interview must be proposed, these are to be found within the social dimension of the communication type and, in particular, in the co-construction of the conversational structure (Bazzanella 1994) which focuses on the conception of 'interdependent' subject (Markus, Kitayama 1991) as well as on the relation inevitably existing between a message and its context (Fele 2007, p. 29). In fact, the analysis of these two videos reveals how the cooperativeness and circularity concepts

30 This would not be doable even at quantitative level.

(Balboni 2007; Okamoto 2008; Machida, Katō 2004), often identified as the cornerstones of the Japanese interaction procedures, should actually be recontextualised from a sociopragmatic point of view in the light of a communication unpredictable and potentially 'non-conventional' in itself (Van Compernelle 2014).<sup>31</sup> In this regard, the cooperative intention of the speakers in the first interview is conveyed through repeated superimpositions, sudden interventions, suggestions aimed at the so-called 'emotional' sharing of the content (Suzuki 2006; Sawano 2008). Similarly, at a non-verbal level, the assumed absence of gestures typical of the Japanese is here debunked by a frequent use of numerous deictic, iconographic and kinetographic signals (Tassan 2005) complementary to the evocative purposes of language and to the use of particular diastatic strategies of interaction. In the first video, for example, the frequent use of loanwords (*gairaigo*) is accompanied by very strong hand gestures, while the second video is characterised by an interesting involvement of iconographic signals during the narration.

How could the learners be taught how to manage such a complex interaction procedure? From a theoretical point of view, in the light of the foregoing, it is clear how an effective teaching can start a process of awareness that urges the learners to look at new ways of interaction, simultaneously stimulating a process of identity able to put them in contact with the mindset and the 'feeling' of the languacultures being studied. In this regard, as I already suggested elsewhere (Vitucci 2013), the interactional dimension of communication should be at the centre of the learning process by regarding the learner as a social entity who linguistically operates through his own identity in another languaculture. To confirm this, please note that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) also introduces language and communication competence intended as the sum of the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects (Vitucci 2013, p. 3).

From a practical point of view, however, as evidenced by the videos presented here, Japanese language learners should be aware that - at intercultural level - it is right to respond to the stimuli of the interlocutor even only to show one's attentiveness (*hai, ee, uhm, uh::m*), agreement (*sono toori desu, sō desu ne, sore wa iemasu ne, naruhodo*) or to support the communication flow through feedbacks expressing astonishment (*eh?, ha?, hontō?, hontō desuka?, ara!, uhm:::!, ne:::!, okashi::ne:::!, ah!, suteki!, hee:::!*) given the different ways in which these functions are expressed in their mother tongue culture. Similarly, the strategies of denial (*iie, iya:::*), elicitation of information (*to iu to?, to osshaimasu to?, dō iu imi?*) together with a careful analysis of extraverbal (eye contact, proxemics, gestures) and paraverbal components (prosody, rhythm), as well as reformulation/

31 The complete absence of the honorific language in both contributions, for example, is particularly indicative.

filling strategies (self-corrections, hesitations, fillers) can provide learners with useful tools to hold a conversation in Japanese even outside the typologies explained above. Obviously, it is important that these elements are regarded by learners as complementary instead of a mere 'decoration' of the conversation. That is why teachers shall have to convey the intrinsic value of the *effectiveness* of interaction rather than that of linguistic correctness or complexity. In this regard, as Fele states:

When we say something, we can ask questions, greet, answer, rejoice, accuse, invite, blame, respond [...] These are real actions carried out through the words addressed to our interlocutor. Too often the language is considered only a means of reflection, through the thoughts, and communication of information, neglecting the value of *action* of the words spoken. (Fele 2007, pp. 30-31)

As for Japanese, these interviews show that, in order to communicate the 'right' messages with the right timing, it is necessary to select the most appropriate speech acts, carefully calculating the appropriate moment of their expression. From a chronemic point of view, the support of conversation analysis is essential, as it allows us to focus on specific temporal phenomena such as, for example, superimpositions, thus questioning not only the turn-taking system, but rather the whole genre of dialogue in this languaculture. In the videos analysed, for example, a very high percentage of superimpositions (aimed at conveying various types of feedbacks) made the management of the interview rather 'irregular' in terms of succession of adjacent pairs (Liddicoat 2007). Once again, however, it goes without saying that, instead of focusing on those phenomena shared by conversation methods of all languages belonging to the 'hardware system', local realisation procedures should be analysed first (Balboni 2012). At a purely educational level, this proves essential since it reveals how learners can be supported by multimedia files both in the development of conversational contents and, above all, in the right interactive procedures at intercultural level. Quoting Fabio Caon, the author would like to conclude this brief study stressing once again the centrality of the relationship between linguistic and sociopragmatic learning:

If there is no effective communication or cultural and linguistic (inter)comprehension, there can be no intercultural education: sociopragmatic and cultural competence [...] should further enrich the specific skills promoted by intercultural education and combine with them. (Caon 2008, p. XVII)

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## Recensioni





**Meynard, Thierry (2015). *The Jesuit Reading of Confucius: The First Complete Translation of the Lunyu (1687) Published in the West.* Leiden; Boston: Brill, 675 pp., 12 figs.**

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This book is the second episode of what will hopefully be Meynard's trilogy (or tetralogy, time will tell) dedicated to the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus sive Scientia Sinensis Latine exposita* (Paris, 1687; CSP hereafter). The CSP was the book that first introduced Confucian thought in the West and that represented the apex of the syncretic effort between Confucianism and Christianity, started by Matteo Ricci more than one century before. The work, which included the first translations in a Western language of three of the Confucian *Four Books* (the *Great Learning* [*Dàxué* 大學], the *Doctrine of the Mean* [*Zhōngyōng* 中庸] and the *Dialogues* [*Lúnyǔ* 論語]) with selected commentaries, was extensively read and appreciated in the highest European cultural circles. Thanks to these Latin translations made by the Jesuits P. Intorcetta, F. Rougemont, C. Herdrtrich and P. Couplet, the thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw in the far Chinese Empire, anchored on the law and on the government of the class of the literati, an admirable example that Europe should follow to begin a complete reform of the state and its economy. Even those who later on launched the French Revolution were all very enthusiastic admirers of China and Confucianism. Until recent times, however, the readership of this important work has been limited to those who knew Latin language. A Modern English translation was extremely longed for and is now truly welcomed.

Meynard, currently Professor of philosophy and religious studies at Sun Yat-sen University in Guǎngzhōu, comes as no stranger to working on this topic. Since 2005 he has published quite a few scholarly papers concerning the Latin translation of the Confucian Classics.<sup>1</sup> After publishing the book

1 See: Meynard, Thierry (2005). «Religion and its Modern Fate: The Shaping of the Concept between the West and China». *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 45 (4), pp. 483-97; Meynard, Thierry 梅謙立 (2008). «Zuìchū xīwén fānyì de rùjiā jīngdiǎn» «最初西文翻译的儒家经典» (Early Translations in Western Language of the Confucian Classics). *Sun Yat-sen*

*Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1687)*, *The first Translation of the Confucian Classics* (Rome: Institutuum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2011), with the trilingual version of the *Great Learning* included in the *CSP*, Meynard now engages in the same enterprise with the *Dialogues*, offering to readers from all over the world the possibility to access this text. He also translates the biography of Confucius as offered in the *CSP* into Modern English.

The book is opened by an extensive introduction (pp. 1-88) divided into six parts, which retraces all the steps leading to the version of the *Dialogues* included in the *CSP* and the compilation of the *Life of Confucius*.

In Part I, Meynard documents the genesis and development of the translation project of the Confucian *Four Books*, from the time of Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci at the end of the sixteenth century, passing through the first printed versions made by Inácio Da Costa and Prospero Intorcetta in 1662 and 1667-69, and until the final version, published in Paris in 1687 thanks to the efforts of Philippe Couplet. The author provides valuable evidence to finally dispel any doubts concerning the attribution to Ruggieri – not to Ricci – of the first manuscript translation of the *Four Books*, which is today preserved in Rome's National Library.<sup>2</sup> Meynard also offers a new perspective on the history of the compilation of the *Sapientia Sinica*, the first printed translation of the *Dàxué* and the *Lúnyǔ* (first five books). He writes about an early 'translation team' composed of Da Costa, as a teacher, and Intorcetta, Couplet, Herdtrich and Rougemont as students. Da Costa would explain the Confucian texts orally to his students who, in turn, although in distant locations in China, would suggest different interpretations by mail or during seminars. Intorcetta would keep a written record of the discussions and finally edited the printed volume in Jiànchāng in 1662. The translation team was then reconstituted during the Cantonese exile of all the missionaries in 1666, when the translations were revised, in order to make them less 'attackable' by the detractors of the Jesuits who were fuelling the Rites Controversy. Throughout this section, Meynard surely makes interesting, well-argued hypotheses that can stimulate further research on the subject.

Part II substantiates how the Jesuits interwove different Chinese interpretations of the Confucian classics and which commentaries they chose for the translation of the *Lúnyǔ*. Even though officially rejecting Neo-Confucian doctrines, the Jesuits very likely used Zhū Xī 朱熹's edition of

*University Journal* 中山大学学报, 48 (2), pp. 131-42; Meynard, Thierry (2008). «Reading the Classics in the Age of Globalization». *Chinese Cross Currents*, 5 (1), pp. 39-49; Meynard, Thierry (2010). «The First Translation of the Analects». *Chinese Cross-Currents*, 7 (2), pp. 99-111; Meynard, Thierry (2011). «La première traduction des *Entretiens* en Europe». *Études Chinoises*, 30, pp. 173-92.

2 Michele Ruggieri, *China, seu humana institutio*, Biblioteca Nazionale v. Emanuele II di Roma, Fondo Gesuitico (FG) 1185 (3314).

the Classics, *Sishū jízhù* 四書集註, for their translation and Meynard skilfully reconstructs the reasoning behind this choice. The main commentary used to help the interpretation of the text was that of Zhāng Jūzhèng 張居正 (1525-1582), the Imperial Tutor of Wànlì 萬曆, who used the Confucian classics with the purpose of reinstating morality at the court and in the whole empire. Meynard makes a complete portrait of Zhāng's life and thought.

Part III is focused on the editorial choices made by the Jesuits to present the text of the *Dialogues* to the European readers, given the different layers of interpretations that had been added to the original text through the centuries. The first choice concerned the rendering of *Lúnyǔ* in Latin and the title to give to their whole translation work, highlighting the philosophical content of both. Through the study of the manuscript of the *CSP* preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France,<sup>3</sup> Meynard also shows the original intentions of the Jesuits: 1. to keep the original text with Chinese characters; 2. to use the Chinese typesetting to clearly distinguish the original text (written in a bigger font) from the commentaries (in a smaller font). However, this was not feasible and the *CSP* was printed without Chinese characters and no difference of font size, even though superscript numbers were kept on those words that literally translated the original.

Part IV concentrates on the Jesuit reading of the *Lúnyǔ*, on their interpretation of the person of Confucius, mainly as a philosopher but also as a saint (*shèngrén* 聖人), and of some key-concepts of the Confucian and Neo-Confucian doctrines. Meynard critically analyses these themes, presenting a variety of extracts from the text and proving his comprehensive knowledge of both the European and Chinese philosophical systems. His conclusion is that «the Jesuit translations tend to transform Confucianism into universalist ethics» in order to make the message closer to Christianity and more acceptable for European readers. Meynard also stresses that the Jesuits' translation not only included passages from Chinese commentaries, but also words of Ignatius of Loyola himself, concluding that they had found similarities between the conception of politics of their own order and the Chinese imperial system, which they proposed as a model for all of Europe.

In Part V, Meynard makes a very interesting comparison of Confucius' biography as it appeared in the earlier versions of the translations (*Sapientia Sinica*, 1662, and *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis*, 1667-1669) and in the *CSP*, also confronting it with the Chinese sources. Meynard provides the keys to read the three Latin biographies: in the first one (by Da Costa, as Meynard assumes) the stress is placed on Confucius not being idolatrous; in the second one (by Intorcetta) the focus is on Confucius not being an atheist; in the third one (by Couplet) Confucius is presented

3 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), Fonds Latin 6277, 2 vols.

as a political model, whose importance was emphasized also by the inclusion of his portrait.

In the last section of the introduction, Part VI, Meynard discusses how two works, which were abridged French versions of the *CSP*, fought against the 'moral pessimism dominating the intellectual scene in Europe at the time', proposing Confucianism as a model to be followed: *Lettre sur la morale de Confucius, Philosophe de la Chine* (1688) and *La Morale de Confucius, Philosophe de la Chine* (1688). Meynard describes these two works, their authorship, their content and the main purpose of the compilers. He proves that the focus of the former was on Confucius' practical philosophy, whereas the focus of the latter was more on Confucius' morality.

In the conclusion, Meynard points out that even though the Jesuit reading of the *Lúnyǔ* was not always adhering to the Chinese interpretations, it helped western readers access the text, thus allowing two different cultures to communicate.

The core of the book (pp. 93-602), which is the trilingual version of the *Lúnyǔ*, is preceded by a brief explanation of the methodology Meynard used in his own translation work, which provides the reader with the correct tools to access the following pages. The trilingual text follows. For each verse of the *Lúnyǔ*, Meynard offers the Chinese text, its Latin translation with commentaries as in the *CSP*, and the translation in Modern English, which is based on the Latin. The translation is enriched by a useful apparatus of footnotes that aim to clarify the choices of the Latin version or to indicate its commentary sources. The translation of Confucius' biography into Modern English, with annotations on the sources, followed by the Latin original, closes the volume.

The book in its entirety is of high scholarly value and proves Meynard's command of the matter as well as of the three languages involved. It notably advances our knowledge in the field, with its balance of historical research, philosophical interpretation, critical analysis and source edition. Even some of Meynard's assumptions, which might appear bold at times - mainly those concerning the authorship of the translations and of the biography of Confucius in the *Sapientia Sinica* -, are nothing but important stimuli for further research.

## **Alla ricerca del Tempo perduto** Sun, Hongyuan (2014). *Temporal Construals of Bare Predicates in Mandarin Chinese*. Utrecht: LOT Dissertation Series, pp. 246

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**Sommario** 1 Il tempo senza Tempo, un paradosso cinese (e non solo). – 2 Predicati (quasi) nudi. – 3 Tre generalizzazioni empiriche. – 4 Tempo e azionalità. – 5 Predicati stativi e predicati di evento. – 6 Futuro e determinazione. – 7 Conclusione.

### **1 Il tempo senza Tempo, un paradosso cinese (e non solo)**

Nella letteratura linguistica degli ultimi trent'anni, ed in particolare nell'ambito degli studi di sintassi e semantica formale, il cinese mandarino è assunto a paradigma delle lingue senza Tempo, prive del tratto morfosintattico (in inglese: Tense) volto ad esprimere l'informazione temporale, ovvero la categoria semantica del tempo (Li, Thompson 1981; Gōng 1991; Klein, Li, Hendriks 2000; Mei 2002; Lin 2006). Come evidenziato dagli esempi (1) e (2), il cinese non possiede alcun morfema che corrisponda al tempo verbale, una caratteristica che lo differenzia dalle lingue indoeuropee. La frase (1a) contrasta con (1b), in italiano, relativamente al tempo verbale della copula *essere*, che localizza la predicazione dello stato di essere felice rispettivamente nel presente e nel passato rispetto al momento di enunciazione. Il contrasto tra tempo passato e presente non è visibile in cinese, in quanto il predicato *hěn gāoxìng*, nell'esempio (2), non presenta alcun morfema dedicato all'espressione delle relazioni temporali, ed è compatibile con entrambe le interpretazioni.<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. Mario è felice.  
b. Mario era felice.

<sup>1</sup> Nelle glosse degli esempi in lingua cinese utilizzeremo le abbreviazioni seguenti: ASP: morfema aspettuale; CLN: classificatore nominale; POS: morfema di grado positivo; MOD: ausiliare modale; NEG: negazione.

- (2) Xiǎo Lǐ hěn gāoxìng.  
 Xiao Li POS felice  
 Xiao Li è/era felice

La «atemporalità» del cinese e delle altre, numerose lingue che condividono questa caratteristica morfosintattica<sup>2</sup> solleva numerose questioni teoriche, che vanno al di là del fatto empirico e ne giustificano la centralità per l'analisi linguistica. Innanzitutto, è inevitabile constatare che, anche in mancanza di una categoria flessionale dedicata, nella maggior parte delle frasi principali, soprattutto se considerate in un contesto comunicativo, l'informazione temporale è espressa in modo tutt'altro che ambiguo in cinese. Ad esempio, l'atto di mangiare l'anguria da parte di Xiao Li, descritto dalla frase (3), è interpretato da un locutore cinese come precedente il momento di enunciazione, e quindi localizzato nel passato, come dimostra l'incongruenza di un avverbio temporale prospettivo come *míngtiān* 'domani'.

- (3) (zuótiān/#míngtiān) Xiǎo Lǐ chī le yī ge xīguā  
 ieri domani Xiao Li mangiare ASP uno CIN anguria

Ed ecco quindi la prima domanda, che nella sua immediatezza interpella da tempo i linguisti (e probabilmente anche tutti coloro che desiderano imparare il cinese): com'è possibile esprimere il tempo (*time*) senza Tempo (*Tense*)? Più precisamente: qual è l'apporto del contributo semantico delle altre categorie verbali (l'aspetto, la modalità) e delle categorie circostanziali (gli avverbi e gli avverbiali) per la determinazione delle relazioni temporali in cinese?

Il caso del cinese solleva poi una seconda questione che riveste una certa importanza, questa volta da un punto di vista più teorico, e che riguarda lo status della categoria grammaticale del Tempo relativamente all'ipotesi della Grammatica Universale. Tale ipotesi, sviluppatasi nel quadro della sintassi formale di corrente generativista, prevede che le differenze osservabili attraverso le lingue naturali siano regolate da un principio di variazione parametrica, secondo il quale la presenza o l'assenza di un tratto specifico comporta invariabilmente una conseguenza sul piano strutturale che riguarda altri tratti formali. In quest'ottica, le

2 Tra le quali figurano lingue appartenenti a famiglie tipologiche indipendenti, quali le lingue tupi-guarani del bacino amazzonico (Tonhauser 2011), le lingue ciadiche occidentali (cfr. lo hausa, Newman 2000), il groenlandese (Bittner 2005) o ancora le lingue originarie del nordamerica (cfr. gli studi di Matthewson 2006 e Jóhannsdóttir, Matthewson 2008 rispettivamente sulle lingue st'át'imcets e gitxsan).

categorie funzionali, le proiezioni sintattiche che le rappresentano nella struttura e le loro realizzazioni morfofonologiche occupano una posizione di primo piano per l'indagine linguistica. La questione sollevata dal cinese è quindi innanzitutto la seguente: l'assenza di morfologia dedicata è correlata necessariamente con l'assenza della categoria sintattica del Tempo? E, nel caso questa domanda ricevesse una risposta affermativa, quali conseguenze comporterebbe la mancanza del Tempo sulla struttura sintattica del cinese?

Lo studio di Hongyuan Sun solleva entrambe queste questioni, ed ha il pregio di rispondervi in modo chiaro e metodologicamente accurato. Il libro di Sun<sup>3</sup> rappresenta lo studio svolto nell'ambito di un dottorato di ricerca che ha visto la fortunata collaborazione di due direttrici di tesi specialiste della sintassi del cinese (Lisa Lai-Shen Cheng) e della questione del Tempo all'interfaccia sintattico-semantico (Hamida Demirdache), e presenta quindi le garanzie di una notevole qualità scientifica. Questo lavoro di ricerca può tuttavia interessare un pubblico vasto, che oltrepassa la sfera dei linguisti teorici, in quanto coniuga in modo equilibrato l'attenzione alle questioni teoriche con un approccio empirico e descrittivo rivolto più specificatamente al cinese mandarino e sviluppato in modo tale da poter rispondere alla curiosità e alle esigenze di un pubblico di sinologi e insegnanti (e, perché no, studenti) interessati all'uso e alla descrizione della lingua cinese.

## 2 Predicati (quasi) nudi

Nonostante molti studi formali abbiano affrontato l'analisi dei morfemi aspettuali e dell'aspetto lessicale del verbo in cinese,<sup>4</sup> lo studio di Sun è uno dei pochi, assieme a Klein, Li, Hendriks (2000) e Smith, Erbaugh (2005), a considerare il caso dei predicati nudi. Per apprezzare la pertinenza di questa linea di sviluppo, è necessario riprendere brevemente il dibattito relativo alla presenza o assenza dell'informazione temporale all'interno della letteratura linguistica formale sulla lingua cinese.

L'assenza di morfologia dedicata alle relazioni temporali ha ispirato due principali linee di analisi. Un certo numero di lavori recenti concentrano l'analisi principalmente sul piano sintattico, e sono volti a dimostrare che la categoria grammaticale del Tempo, e la proiezione sintattica corrispondente, sono presenti anche nella struttura sintattica del cinese, nonostante

3 Ora disponibile gratuitamente online: [http://www.lotpublications.nl/Documents/373\\_fulltext.pdf](http://www.lotpublications.nl/Documents/373_fulltext.pdf) (2016-06-12).

4 Cfr., fra gli altri, Chao 1968; Li, Thompson 1981; Smith 1991; Klein, Li, Hendriks 2000 e Lin 2006.



i suoi tratti morfologici non siano necessariamente realizzati apertamente (Li 1990; Simpson, Wu 2002; Sybesma 2007). In altre parole, secondo i sostenitori di questa ipotesi, il cinese non è affatto senza Tempo, ma anzi possiede, relativamente alla presenza di questa proiezione, la stessa struttura sintattica di una lingua con una ricca morfologia flessionale, e differisce solo riguardo alla regolazione dei parametri di rappresentazione morfofonologica della testa sintattica Tempo. Una seconda linea di analisi sostiene al contrario che non c'è bisogno di un morfema per così dire silenzioso (Klein 1994, Smith, Erbaugh 2005, Li 2006).<sup>5</sup> A questo proposito, un'analisi semantica invocherà il contributo dell'informazione aspettuale del lessema e del sintagma verbale (la sua *Aktionsart*, o azionalità), di altre categorie grammaticali come l'aspetto o il modo, o ancora l'informazione veicolata dai satelliti del sintagma verbale (avverbi e avverbiali circostanziali di tempo), i quali contribuiscono alla determinazione dell'interpretazione della frase interagendo in base a principi cognitivi e pragmatici universali (Smith 1991, 2008).

La questione quindi riposa su assunti teorici che sembrano irriducibili e si è dimostrata finora difficile da dirimere con argomenti empirici. Sun affronta il problema ponendosi quindi la domanda seguente: cosa succede quando non c'è alcun altro indizio esplicito nella frase per guidare l'interpretazione temporale? Qualora il predicato verbale sia 'nudo', ovvero privo di modificatori aspettuativi o avverbiali, la situazione che descrive può ancora essere localizzata nel tempo in modo univoco?

Nel prosieguo di questo breve saggio critico, proporremo una sintesi dell'argomentazione di Sun e della nostra indagine sullo stesso argomento (Donazzan 2008; Donazzan, Schwer, Tovina 2010), che ne precorre alcuni sviluppi pur proponendo una diversa analisi formale. Abbiamo scelto di concentrare questa recensione principalmente sull'aspetto più descrittivo dell'analisi, con l'intento di rispondere alla prima delle due questioni sollevate nella sezione 1, e di farlo più particolarmente da un punto di vista semantico. La domanda a cui, con l'aiuto del lavoro di Sun, cercheremo di rispondere sarà quindi: una volta perduto il Tempo, dov'è possibile ritrovare il tempo?

### 3 Tre generalizzazioni empiriche

Per cominciare, consideriamo alcuni dati empirici. Nella frase (4), che riprende l'esempio (2) della sezione precedente, il predicato *hen gaoxing* '(essere) felice' appare 'nudo', senza affissi aspettuativi o modificatori di tipo avverbiale. Al contrario della frase nell'esempio (3), che dev'essere

5 Una discussione più esauriente delle diverse posizioni è presentata da Sun (2014, pp. 181-192)

interpretata come un'affermazione riguardo ad un evento passato, la frase (4) può essere interpretata in modo episodico relativamente al presente (Xiao Li è felice nel momento in cui stiamo parlando).

- (4) Xiǎo Lǐ hěn gāoxìng  
 Xiao Li POS felice  
 Xiao Li è felice

Tuttavia, il predicato nudo della frase (4) può ricevere anche una localizzazione nel passato rispetto al momento di enunciazione, come mostra la sua compatibilità con un avverbiale retrospettivo (5).

- (5) Xiǎo Lǐ zuótiān hěn gāoxìng  
 Xiao Li ieri POS felice  
 Xiao Li ieri era felice.

L'interpretazione di (4) non è però del tutto libera. Il predicato nudo non permette di predicare lo stato di felicità di Xiao Li relativamente a un tempo futuro rispetto al momento di enunciazione (6a); affinché la frase sia accettabile, è infatti necessaria la presenza di un ausiliare modale (6b).

- (6) a. #Xiǎo Lǐ míngtiān hěn gāoxìng  
 Xiao Li domani POS felice
- b. Xiǎo Lǐ míngtiān huì hěn gāoxìng  
 Xiao Li domani MOD POS felice  
 Domani Xiao Li sarà felice

Le possibilità di interpretazione di (4), il cui predicato descrive uno stato attribuito a Xiao Li, contrastano con quelle di una frase come (7), il cui predicato descrive un'azione da parte del soggetto. Come mostra l'esempio (7), una frase con questo tipo di predicato nudo può descrivere una proposizione generica, ovvero localizzata al di fuori dal tempo, in quanto verificabile attraverso una generalizzazione di situazioni specifiche. Con l'ausilio di un avverbiale di tempo, la stessa frase può ricevere un'interpretazione non-generica (episodica) ed essere orientata verso il futuro (8), ma non può descrivere un evento che avviene nel passato. Anche l'uso di un avverbio come *xiànzài* «adesso, ora» impone al predicato una lettura immediatamente prospettiva o incettiva (Xiao Li ora sta per [mettersi a] giocare a tennis, cfr. (9)).

- (7) Xiǎo Lǐ dǎ wǎngqiú.  
Xiao Li giocare tennis  
Xiao Li gioca a tennis
- (8) Xiǎo Lǐ míngtiān/zuótiān dǎ wǎngqiú.  
Xiao Li domani/??ieri giocare tennis
- (9) Xiǎo Lǐ xiànzài dǎ wǎngqiú.  
Xiao Li ora giocare tennis  
Adesso Xiao Li gioca a tennis.

La discussione di due predicati verbali con un profilo aspettuale diverso (un predicato stativo e un predicato che denota un'attività) permette dunque di delineare due prime generalizzazioni empiriche (Sun 2014, p. 55).<sup>6</sup>

GenA Le frasi con un predicato nudo di tipo stativo sono sempre accettabili e ricevono un'interpretazione generalmente episodica e stativa (4);

GenB Le frasi con un predicato nudo che denota un evento permettono solo un'interpretazione generica (7); al fine d'ottenere un'interpretazione episodica, sono necessari un modificatore aspettuale (3) o un avverbio temporale (8, 9).

Abbiamo visto poi che la classe lessicale del predicato (la sua azionalità, o *Aktionsart*) condiziona anche la possibilità di localizzazione temporale dell'evento nella lettura episodica, in particolare per ciò che riguarda la lettura prospettiva: in assenza di un ausiliare modale, i predicati stativi escludono tale interpretazione, che invece risulta possibile per i predicati di evento. Possiamo formulare anche questa osservazione come un principio generale, che dovrà tuttavia essere precisato in seguito.

GenC I predicati di evento possono essere interpretati in modo prospettivo anche in assenza di un ausiliare modale (8); i predicati stativi necessitano invece di un modale esplicito (6).

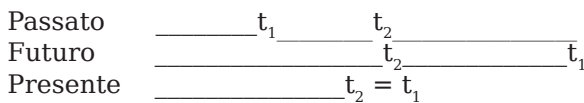
Vediamo ora in che modo queste tre generalizzazioni empiriche possono illuminare il dibattito teorico che abbiamo delineato all'inizio di questa sezione.

<sup>6</sup> Il nostro principio generale (GenB) accorpa due generalizzazioni che Sun, nell'economia della propria argomentazione, preferisce presentare in modo distinto. Precisiamo poi che in questa breve presentazione non abbiamo sviluppato la discussione dell'interpretazione di tutte le classi azionali, come invece proposto, naturalmente, dall'Autrice.

## 4 Tempo e azionalità

La prima questione sollevata dal cinese è quella dell'interpretazione per difetto dei predicati nudi appartenenti a classi azionali diverse. In particolare, abbiamo visto che i predicati stativi sono interpretati per difetto come riferiti al presente, mentre i predicati che denotano eventi sono situati, per così dire, al di fuori del tempo, in quanto descrivono frasi generiche, che non sono verificabili in un momento preciso. Il fatto più importante, però, è che l'interpretazione temporale è in qualche modo risolta anche in queste frasi nude. È quindi lecito supporre che l'informazione temporale possa essere rappresentata da un tratto formale, e che esistano dei principi semantici o pragmatici che permettono di interpretarne il valore.

Seguendo la linea di analisi, ormai di uso corrente nell'ambito della semantica formale, che trova la sua origine nella critica della logica temporale montagoviana, Sun sviluppa la sua argomentazione nel quadro di una rappresentazione relazionale del tempo. L'informazione temporale è rappresentata come una relazione tra punti di riferimento sull'asse temporale, i cui relata devono essere come minimo due: il punto in cui è localizzata la situazione descritta (che chiameremo  $t_1$ ) e un determinato punto di riferimento ( $t_2$ ), che è identificato per difetto con il momento d'enunciazione. Una volta introdotta una relazione di precedenza, si ottengono un ordine totale sulla linea del tempo e, dal punto di vista logico, tre possibilità per la posizione relativa di  $t_1$  e  $t_2$ :  $t_1$  precedente  $t_2$  ( $t_1 < t_2$ ), la relazione inversa ( $t_1 > t_2$ ) e la negazione di entrambe, che risulta una relazione di coincidenza ( $t_1 = t_2$ ). Più concretamente, se diamo al punto di riferimento  $t_2$  il valore del momento di enunciazione (il presente del locutore), otteniamo tre relazioni temporali semplici, nelle quali il punto di riferimento  $t_1$  è localizzato rispettivamente nel passato, nel futuro e nel presente.



Le due variabili  $t_1$  e  $t_2$  rappresentano quindi, dal punto di vista formale, il tratto semantico del Tempo per l'interpretazione. Da tale concezione del tempo come relazione anaforica tra due variabili consegue che la risoluzione dell'interpretazione temporale può essere considerata paragonabile, dal punto di vista logico e cognitivo, alla risoluzione dell'interpretazione di altre forme anaforiche, come i pronomi (Partee 1973). Ora, è noto che la risoluzione anaforica di un pronome non è del tutto libera, ma deve rispondere a dei vincoli sintattici e pragmatici. Nel caso degli indici temporali, i vincoli pragmatici rivestono un ruolo di primo piano: l'interpretazione per difetto è risolta legando la variabile a un intervallo di tempo particolarmente pertinente nel contesto linguistico (o extra-linguistico) di

enunciazione. Come abbiamo anticipato nella discussione precedente, Sun considera che, in assenza di informazione linguistica o extra-linguistica (ovvero, nel caso dei nostri predicati nudi nelle frasi isolate della sezione precedente), l'intervallo temporale più pertinente sia, per difetto, il momento dell'enunciazione stessa.

La scelta di questo approccio formale permette quindi di trovare una spiegazione per una prima osservazione empirica, che non riguarda solo il cinese ma è riscontrabile nella maggior parte delle lingue "senza tempo": la prominenza del presente come interpretazione per difetto. Tuttavia, abbiamo visto che, nel caso dei predicati nudi del cinese, questo vale solo per i predicati stativi, cfr. il contrasto tra (4) e (7), che ha motivato GenA. L'azionalità del predicato gioca quindi un ruolo determinante.

## 5 Predicati stativi e predicati di evento

Abbiamo visto nella sezione precedente che l'informazione temporale può essere rappresentata come una relazione tra due punti nel tempo. I predicati verbali, tuttavia, non descrivono necessariamente situazioni che si verificano in un istante, in un solo punto nel tempo. Questa constatazione complica in parte l'analisi relazionale che abbiamo presentato nella sezione precedente, ma permette anche, allo stesso tempo, di descrivere in modo più accurato la funzione e il contributo semantico della categoria grammaticale dell'aspetto.

Un predicato stativo, come (*essere felice*/hěn gāoxìng della frase (4), può essere verificato relativamente ad un istante, ma è concepito come attribuito al soggetto per un periodo di tempo minimamente esteso. In altre parole, se il fatto di aver intravisto Mario tutto sorridente oggi in biblioteca mi permette di dire, senza mentire, che Mario oggi era felice, questo stato di felicità è concepito con un'estensione nel tempo che va al di là dell'istante in cui ho intravisto Mario – la felicità di Mario non può iniziare e finire in un'istante. I predicati stativi devono quindi essere considerati predicati di un intervallo di tempo, che può comprendere il momento di enunciazione ma non si limita a questo solo istante puntuale. La situazione appare diversa per quanto riguarda i predicati che descrivono un evento. Il predicato descritto dalla frase (2) (*mangiare un'anguria*) descrive un'azione che richiede verosimilmente un certo tempo per essere portata a compimento, ma le condizioni di verifica sono in questo caso diverse. Se oggi passando davanti alla mensa universitaria ho intravisto Mario che mangiava un'anguria, ciò non mi permette di dire, senza mentire, che Mario ha mangiato un'anguria prima del nostro incontro fugace, e che abbia continuato a mangiarla in seguito, ma non posso essere sicura che Mario abbia portato a compimento l'azione descritta dal predicato *mangiare un'anguria*. La frase (2) rappresenta quindi un'affermazione di

cui, in questo contesto, non posso assumere la responsabilità; nelle stesse condizioni, tuttavia, posso dire, senza mentire, che quando l'ho intravisto alla mensa Mario *stava mangiando un'anguria*. Questa affermazione in effetti non implica in alcun modo che Mario abbia portato a termine l'azione descritta dal predicato nudo *mangiare un'anguria*. L'aspetto imperfettivo 'trasforma', per così dire, un predicato di evento in un predicato d'intervallo, simile a uno stativo, che può essere verificato in un istante nel tempo. In questo rispetto, il cinese non è molto diverso dall'italiano. Se un predicato stativo come (2) può essere localizzato nel presente anche quando è nudo, un predicato di evento, per essere predicato relativamente al momento d'enunciazione, deve necessariamente essere modificato da un morfema aspettuale che esprime un aspetto imperfettivo, come ad esempio il progressivo *zài* in (10).

- (10) Xiǎo Lǐ zài chī yī ge xīguā  
Xiao Li ASP mangiare uno CIN anguria

Considerando quindi che l'aspetto grammaticale ha precisamente la funzione di trasformare un predicato di evento in un predicato di intervallo, possiamo spiegare i fatti empirici descritti dalle due generalizzazioni GenA e GenB. I predicati 'nudi' che descrivono uno stato sono sempre interpretabili, e ricevono per difetto un'interpretazione episodica relativa al momento di enunciazione. I predicati di evento, invece, non sono accettabili senza un modificatore aspettuale, a meno che non siano interpretati come frasi generiche.

L'interpretazione generica può essere vista in effetti come una sorta di strategia di ripiego: non potendo localizzare l'evento nel tempo, il predicato è interpretato come l'affermazione di una verità fuori dal tempo, la cui validità riposa sulla pertinenza della predicazione (dell'attribuzione del predicato al soggetto) piuttosto che sulla sua verifica in un momento preciso.<sup>7</sup> In questa luce, si può comprendere anche perché non tutti i predicati nudi di evento abbiano lo stesso grado di accettabilità in quanto frasi generiche. I predicati che descrivono delle attività che possono essere concepite come ricorrenti, come *dǎ wǎngqíú/giocare a tennis* nell'esempio (6), ricevono facilmente un'interpretazione generica, mentre le frasi costruite con predicati che descrivono azioni più specifiche, come *chī yī ge xīguā/mangiare un'anguria* dell'esempio (2), devono in ogni caso

7 Dal punto di vista formale, diremo quindi che le variabili temporali sono legate da un operatore generico, che ha il valore di un quantificatore universale. Per quanto riguarda le condizioni semantiche e pragmatiche che rendono accettabile una predicazione generica, il dibattito è ancora aperto. Nell'ambito della letteratura pertinente, cfr. ad esempio Cohen 2004.

comportare dei modificatori circostanziali che sottolineano il carattere ricorrente dell'azione (cfr. le espressioni avverbiali di quantificazione temporale come *měi xīngqītiān/ogni domenica* o *yìbān/generalmente, di solito* nell'esempio (11)).

- (11) *měi xīngqītiān* Xiǎo Lǐ *yìbān* chī yī ge *xīguā*  
 Ogni domenica Xiao Li solitamente mangiare uno CIN anguria  
 Di solito, Xiao Li mangia un'anguria alla domenica.

## 6 Futuro e determinazione

Veniamo ora alla terza delle generalizzazioni che abbiamo delineato alla fine della sezione 3. GenC, che abbiamo espresso in modo volutamente provvisorio, riguarda il rapporto tra l'azionalità del predicato e la sua localizzazione nel futuro del tempo di enunciazione. I dati empirici pertinenti sono riportati di seguito: i) i predicati stativi nudi non permettono, neppure con l'ausilio di un avverbiale di tempo, un'interpretazione prospettiva (12a); tale interpretazione diventa possibile solo in presenza di un ausiliare modale (12b); ii) l'interpretazione prospettiva è invece possibile per i predicati nudi di evento (13).

- (12) a. # Xiǎo Lǐ míngtiān hěn gāoxìng  
 Xiao Li domani POS felice
- b. Xiǎo Lǐ míngtiān yào/huì hěn gāoxìng  
 Xiao Li domani MOD MOD POS felice  
 Domani Xiao Li sarà felice.
- (13) Xiǎo Lǐ míngtiān dǎ wǎngqiú.  
 Xiao Li domani giocare tennis  
 Domani Xiao Li giocherà a tennis

Abbiamo visto, nella sezione precedente, che i verbi stativi e i predicati che descrivono azioni e attività differiscono per la loro struttura aspettuale, in quanto descrivono situazioni che possono essere predicate riguardo ad entità di tipo diverso, rispettivamente intervalli di tempo ed eventi. Questa osservazione ci ha permesso di spiegarne l'interpretazione temporale relativamente al tempo presente (che è l'interpretazione per difetto in assenza di indicazioni specifiche), e si rivela pertinente anche per definire i criteri

di interpretazione nel passato del momento d'enunciazione. Per affrontare la questione dell'interpretazione nel futuro, tuttavia, è necessario considerare un parametro supplementare, quello della modalità.

Sun, basandosi principalmente sull'analisi della lingua salish st'át'micets di Matthewson (2006), considera il contrasto tra (12) e (13) come la prova della presenza di un morfema temporale il cui contributo semantico limita l'interpretazione delle frasi senza ausiliare modale al tempo non-futuro. In quest'ottica, quindi, le frasi nude che permettono una lettura prospettiva possiedono un elemento modale implicito. In seguito ci concentreremo su quest'ultimo aspetto dell'analisi.

Ciò che distingue un'affermazione relativa al presente o al passato da un'affermazione che riguarda il futuro è, innanzitutto, il grado di certezza con cui il locutore può affermare la situazione descritta. Possiamo descrivere questa certezza come il riflesso dello stato epistemico del locutore. Se una situazione passata o presente può essere certa per il locutore (perché verificata personalmente, o perché presentata come tale), l'affermazione di una situazione futura, che deve ancora verificarsi, è determinata essenzialmente dalla possibilità di predirne lo sviluppo a partire dal momento presente. Gli indizi che possono essere presi in considerazione per generare una previsione possono essere di tipo diverso: l'osservazione di una legge generale, la concomitanza di fattori coadiuvanti, la volontà stessa del soggetto parlante o la presenza, al momento presente, di un processo che è concepito come già in corso che, se non viene arrestato, porterà a una prevedibile conclusione. Potremmo quindi descrivere la nozione di futuro attraverso due gruppi nozionali principali: le intenzioni (prodotto della volontà del soggetto parlante) e le inferenze predittive (inferenze sull'avvenimento possibile di fatti che sfuggono al controllo immediato del parlante)., Nonostante l'attribuzione di un'intenzione ad un soggetto abbia un peso importante anche nel caso delle inferenze predittive, in seguito ci concentreremo principalmente su questo secondo gruppo, e proporremo un confronto critico tra l'analisi di Sun e la nostra proposta, sviluppata in Donazzan (2008).

Nella proposta di Kratzer (1981), che costituisce il quadro formale e concettuale del lavoro di Donazzan (2008), il grado di certezza del locutore, o la 'forza' modale dell'affermazione, è specificato dagli ausiliari modali, nelle lingue come l'inglese e il cinese, e dal morfema del futuro nelle lingue flessive (morfema flessivo che spesso deriva, come in italiano, da una perifrasi modale<sup>8</sup>). In quest'ottica, la domanda che ci dobbiamo porre è quindi la seguente: a quale grado di certezza corrisponde l'operatore modale implicito delle frasi che comportano un predicato nudo?

L'osservazione empirica sulla quale si fonda la proposta di Donazzan

8 Cfr. Bybee, Perkins, Pagliuca 1987, e Fleishmann 1982 come introduzione alle lingue romanze.



(2008), sottolineata indipendentemente anche da Sun, è la seguente. Il contrasto tra (12b) e (14) non può essere imputato esclusivamente ad una differenza aspettuale tra i predicati delle due frasi. Da un lato, vi sono infatti predicati stativi che permettono un'interpretazione prospettiva; dall'altro, vi sono anche frasi, il cui predicato descrive un evento, che non possono essere interpretate relativamente al futuro senza l'ausilio di un modale. Le frasi dell'esempio (14a,b) illustrano il primo caso; le frasi (15a,b) esemplificano il secondo.

- (14) a. Xiǎo Lǐ míngtiān hěn mǎng.  
Xiao Li domani POS occupato  
Domani Xiao Li è molto occupato.
- b. Wǒ xià xīnqītiān bù zài.  
io prossima domenica NEG  
Domenica prossima non ci sarò.
- (15) a. ??Míngtiān xiàyǔ.  
domani piovere
- b. #Xià xīnqītiān Xiǎo Lǐ yǐng.  
prossima domenica Xiao Li vincere

La differenza tra (14) e (12), da un lato, e (15) e (13), dall'altro, non è aspettuale ma riguarda la possibilità di prevedere l'occorrenza nel futuro della situazione descritta. Tale possibilità può essere espressa come la possibilità di pianificare la situazione a partire dal momento presente, ed è la caratteristica propria della lettura prospettiva del presente in italiano e del presente progressivo in inglese (Smith 1991; Copley 2002, 2008). L'associazione di questa particolare lettura prospettiva alle caratteristiche aspettuative del predicato, secondo la quale i predicati stativi nudi non possono essere predicati del futuro, rappresenta solo una tendenza, che origina dal fatto che la presenza di un piano implica un controllo o una programmazione difficilmente compatibili con un predicato stativo. In effetti, le frasi (14a) o (14b) sono perfettamente plausibili se enunciate in un contesto in cui il locutore sta controllando la sua agenda per rispondere a un invito, un contesto, quindi, in cui lo stato di essere occupato e di (non) essere a casa sono programmati, e quindi definiti come certi al momento presente. Al contrario, è molto più difficile, se non impossibile, immaginare un contesto di programmazione per le frasi (15a,b), che pure presentano dei predicati di evento.

La soluzione adottata da Sun per rendere conto di questi dati empirici è di riprendere la proposta di Copley (2002) che invoca la pertinenza di un

'regista' o 'responsabile' per legittimare i contesti di programmazione. Sul piano formale, l'analisi di Donazzan (2008) si discosta da questa proposta, poiché definisce la programmazione come un'estensione prospettiva della necessità storica del passato (Kaufmann, Condoravdi, Harizanov 2006), svincolando quindi l'analisi della prevedibilità dalla questione della legittimazione e ricentrandola sul piano epistemico. In questo senso, pur non invocando la presenza di un morfema temporale non-futuro, tale proposta è tuttavia compatibile con la conclusione di Sun secondo la quale i contesti di programmazione sono dei contesti di tempo non-futuro.

## 7 Conclusione

Il lavoro di Sun è un eccellente studio formale e descrittivo della questione della determinazione temporale in cinese mandarino. Tuttavia, la discussione di questo lavoro ci ha permesso di sollevare alcuni aspetti della semantica del tempo e dell'aspetto che interessano l'analisi e la comprensione delle lingue e del linguaggio in una prospettiva che va al di là del caso illustrato da questa lingua particolare. Ci auguriamo quindi che le prospettive comparativa e teorica che abbiamo segnalato in questa recensione possano suscitare l'interesse non solo dei sinologi ma di chiunque sia interessato, più generalmente, a comprendere la logica e il funzionamento del linguaggio umano.

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