Each one gives law to his children and to his wives.
ARISTOTLE[1]

INTRODUCTION

The *San tzu ching* 三字經, the "*Three-Character Classic*" or "*Trimetrical Classic*" (GILES, p. III) was for countless generations of East Asian schoolboys the authoritative introduction to literate culture. In Manchuria, Mongolia, Japan, Korea, Annam as well as in China proper it informed the education – ideally, the education of a future mandarin – wherever the administration acted according to the standards of Confucianism, as long as the kanjis[2] were written with the brush.

The *San tzu ching* had in East Asia the same function as for us, in the West, the "*DONAT*" (of Aelius Donatus, a grammarian of the fourth century A.D.). Till roughly 1900, as long as western boys were taught Latin effectively, they were taught the *DONAT*; and in the East, as long as the boys were to learn literary Chinese properly, they received their first initiation from the *San tzu ching* ... or from one of its precursors. Its characteristic teaching method is certainly much older than the *San tzu ching* as we have it today, and which is of Manchu doing.

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1) *Politics*, I, 1252^{b} 20; quoted according to Plato, *Laws*, III, 680 B; who in turn quotes loosely from Homer, *Odyssey*, IX, 114; cf. also *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 1180a 28.
2) Since anyway it is unlikely that a student will pronounce the Chinese word 字 tzu[4] correctly, and since the English words "letter" or "character" are inadequate, I adopted the Japanese designation kanji 漢 字 "Chinese graphic sign": a word which is easy to articulate and perfectly unambiguous.

The Preface tells us that the primer was composed by Wang Ying-lin 王 應 麟. This attribution is unlikely. The *San tzu ching* is not mentioned in the official list of his publications, and, as Michael Fishlen has observed: the numerological categories of the *San tzu ching* at times do not agree with those of the 小 學 紺 珠 *Hsiao hsioh kan chu*, the "Purple pearl of elementary learning" which indisputably is the work of Wang Ying-lin. Hence, the attribution was probably political rather than factual. Wang Ying-lin (1223-1296), an illustrious Han-Chinese polymath of Southern Sung (1127-1280), went over to the Mongol conquerors, and served the victorious 元 Yüan dynasty (1280-1371). As a counterpart, the *San tzu ching* tells us about Tou Yen-shan, a Tatar, who championed Confucian learning (# IV).

THE TAI CH'ING DYNASTY

The importance set on Confucian learning rather than on ethnicity accords with the China-policy of the ruling Manchu dynasty Tai^4 Ch'ing^4 大 清 (also writen Ts'ing). This Imperial dynasty, last in China's long history, is commonly dated 1644-1908. However, a more inclusive computation would rather date it from 1616, when Nurhachi proclaimed *abakai fulingga,* his obtainment of the "Heavenly Mandate" (天 命), till 1945, when it disappeared, an indirect victim of the two atomic bombs which the United States of America threw on humankind.

The Chinese dynastic name Tai Ch'ing (N.B.: the name is properly Tai Ch'ing, and not just Ch'ing, as it is commonly quoted) is the phonetic rendering of the Mongol/Manchu *dayichin* "the war heroes"; its Chinese meaning, "The supremely clean one", contrasts the new regime with that of the supremely corrupt Ming (1368 onwards). The Ming dynasty was Han-Chinese. The Manchus were Tunguses living along the rivers Yalu and Tumen, "between the two seas", viz. the Sea of Japan (presently the region of Vladivostok) and the Yellow Sea (at the other side of the Korean peninsula). The name is derived from an ancestor named Manju (pronounce *mánchoo*), which is a very common

anthroponym both in Manchuria and in Mongolia. It is the shortened form of Mañjushrî (*man-choo-shree*; Sanskrit: "The one radiant with delight"), the Lamaist god (the "Buddha") of learning and literature; in Chinese 文殊師利 Wen-shu-shih-li "the incisive sharpness of literate instruction". Iconography shows him in a seated position; his attributes are a book and a sword he swings over his head. Buddha Mañjushrî incarnated himself in each of the Manchu emperors upon their ascension to the throne.

This being the case, no wonder that the emperors of the Dayichin dynasty developed throughout their empire an astounding activity in all areas of culture and education. Personally they all were devote and, indeed, sincere Lamaist Buddhists. They fervently encouraged Lamaist monasticism and monastic studies in Tibet, in Mongolia and, at home, in Manchuria, also in the Chinese border regions; however, they were not sectarian and, in China proper, they promoted Confucian learning, lavishing honours upon scholars, and money on erudite projects such as the compilation of gigantic encyclopaedias, dictionaries, reference works, as well as on the collecting, collating, editing of the Confucian classics and of well-nigh the entire Chinese literature. The output is awesome, both for its quantity and for its quality, indeed, the glorious swan song of Chinese civilization.

EDUCATION

Concomitant with this cultural program was, of necessity, an educational program. In Manchu imperial China, total illiteracy did not exist among men. There were elementary schools in every village; and the boys were taught the *San tzu ching*. The meaning of what they were learning was not of prime importance: an understanding would develop later, gradually, by its own accord. What was important was primarily the chanting and the writing – which amounted, in modern terms, to a training of the memory, a training in manual skill, a training in mental concentration (all three sorrily lacking in today's Western education). The chanting may not have demanded too great an effort: children learn by

heart fairly easily, especially when the text shows rhyme and rhythm. Great importance, however, was attached to a correct pronunciation. In contrast, writing demanded a great effort of skill and concentration. It was taught in the following way: the teacher soaked his writing brush in red ink and traced on a sheet of yellowish paper one large kanji. Then the "young scholar" had to trace over again in black ink the teacher‘s red kanji so as to cover it completely and perfectly. His brush had to follow exactly the teacher's strokes. Hold your breath! Impossible to correct, to mend an imperfection. Kanji writing is like violin playing: a weak stroke of the brush, a weak stroke of the bow... and all you can do is to try again – and again, and again, a million times, a lifetime.

一 正 無 私 yi$^{1.5}$ cheng^{4} wu^{2} ssu^{1} "Correct at the first attempt, and no amendments" are the four kanjis which form the body of the god of letters and examinations, 魁 星 K'ui^{1} hsing^{1}, a star of the Great Dipper (see attached picture). After class, the writing exercises were not wasted or put to profane use: they were either burned in a special furnace located on the school yard, or sold as talismans to ward off the demons, ghosts and goblins of which China was replete.

MASTER WANG‘S COMMENTARY

There exist several commentaries to the official primer; however, the one most highly regarded is the 訓 詁 hsün^{4} ku$^{3.4}$, "the explications" of Master Wang, published 1666 (cf. the Preface). But who was Master Wang? We would expect him to be a scholar comparable in prestige to Wang Ying-lin. Nothing of that sort. The biographical dictionaries list him as 王 相 wang^{2} hsiang^{4} "Master Wang", for his given name is not known; and they have next to nothing to tell us about his life. We may suspect a well guarded pseudonym. Whatever. In best Confucian tradition his commentary presents itself as a web of classical quotations. Far above the intellectual level of schoolboys, it details, by means of literary allusions and historical examples, the philosophy and all the background knowledge contained in the terse couplets of the *San tzu ching*. It was destined for the school teacher's own use.

K’ui[1] hsing[1] (cf. p. 10)
Rubbing from a stele at Lung-men
(see F.A.B., “The goblin K’uei sing”,
in *K’uei sing* (p. 171–176), Indiana Univ. Press, 1974.)

In theory, a school teacher held the lowest academic degree: he was a “B.A.”, properly a “blooming talent” 秀 才 hsiu[4] ts’ai[2] – but without tenure. In order to prevent laziness every teacher had to retake the Bachelor’s examination once every three years. If he obtained the grade “one”, he was publicly honoured and recommended for promotion. In contrast, if he got a “five”, which was the lowest grade, he was divested from his Bachelor’s robe and chased off the school yard. Presenting an outline of the Confucian universe, Master Wang‘s commentary contains material from these “refresher examinations”.

THE QUOTATION

Commenting on a teacher’s patient hunt for *loci classici*, *SMITH* tells us in a footnote (p. 166):

The labour which must have been expended upon a mere trifle like this, is best appreciated by considering the trouble involved in untwisting the well woven thread. A scholar of more than twenty years‘ experience in teaching the Classics [...] occupied almost all his spare time for a week in ascertaining and verifying the references.

Certainly. However, these are only “trifles” in the eyes of an outsider. As far as the teacher was concerned, his job, or at the very least his promotion, was at stake. And rightly so. Pinpointing the classical references (quotations and allusions) contained in a Chinese text constitutes the key to its correct understanding. Unless all the references are recognized and ascertained, a correct interpretation is not established, a fact which is proven on every page of the present study.

The Chinese quotation is a genuine and very important mode of expression – unlike the Western quotation which is a mere ornament of style intended to prove an author‘s erudition, and, occasionally, to give additional weight to an argument by conjuring up the ghost of a well-known authority. The Chinese quotation may also do just that, of course; generally, however, it does not stay for itself, but its meaning includes all its original context. Rarely does a

Chinese quotation carry a name tag, or stand between quotation marks. The reader is supposed to know his classics by heart, to recognize the quoted word/expression/sentence immediately and to be able to replace it into its original context – which, however, must be "ascertained and verified". In this way, the Chinese quotation provides the stated argument with a new, and often unexpected, dimension. A quotation may even turn a statement into its contrary. Failure to recognize a quotation, failure to trace a word back to its source, generally results in a misinterpreting of the text. Also: full profit can be derived from the present study only if the student takes upon himself to follow the Chinese example. Do as the Chinese did, and check and meditate a quoted pericope (or poem) in conjunction with the quoting text.

A Chinese quotation needs not to be long. It may be as short as a single kanji. What counts is that it makes good sense. For instance, the name of Master Wang's studio 訒 jen^{4}, ["The Cell where one] Ponders-the-words" (cf. the Preface). Certainly, this 訒 jen^{4} (literally: "to dissect the word", i.e. the kanji) is an ordinary word. Yet, in the case of a studio's name, any literate man replaces it into its proper context, namely *Lun yü*, *HY* 22.12.13 (*C.*, p. 199; *L.*, p. 251-252), where it says: *Sse-ma Niu asked about* 仁 *jen*^{2} (viz. the virtue of the perfect mandarin, cf. # 3_2-L, Note). *The Master said:* "*The man possessed of* 仁 *jen*^{2} *ponders his words*…" &c., meaning that the owner of the studio claims this virtue *jen*^{2} 仁 both for himself and for his visitors. It so happens, that the quoted *Lun yü* pericope is the only occurrence of 訒 jen^{4} in the Classics. If this were not the case, however, the reader would choose the occurrence which makes sense, of course, just as any listener, when faced with a choice of homophonic words, chooses the one that makes sense.

Also, the scholar, well versed in the Classics, will trace a word to its classic logion, when an illiterate person would just see an ordinary expression. Example: 請 問 in # 3_2-F. This is a very normal way to say "to ask politely". However, a literate understanding will trace it to *MENCIUS.* And we must

leave unanswered the question whether *ts'ing*[3] *wen*[4] did not become an ordinary expression because every man has been taught the story of Mencius as told by Master Wang, in school. This mode of expressing oneself presupposes that everybody has learned by heart the same books. As for us, Sinologues, we must subvene our ignorance by means of copious researching in dictionaries and indices. This is very time consuming, but it is unavoidable if we want to understand correctly a Chinese author. Hence, once again: the student will not derive maximal profit from the present book, unless he checks every single reference, and meditates the significance of the quoted pericope in relation to the quoting passage.

Note:
Take your time. The hieroglyphic style (ku wen) was never meant to be read in a fluent fashion. Right to the contrary. 訒 jen[4] "the pondering of the words" is the essence of ku-wen reading. The pondering of each word. This implies much consulting of the dictionaries and reference works, checking indices, and following up the references right into the stacks of the library. The "pondering of words" takes much time. It always has taken much time. The literati of yore may have known their Classics by heart (a time saver for sure); however, they did consult all sorts of dictionaries and reference works. Probably they consulted them more extensively than we can afford to do it now. Since these dictionaries and reference works exist – cf. *TENG & BIGGERSTAFF* – there must have existed a need for them, and they must have been used.

For all these reasons, and aside from a natural sociability, "the Ancients" avoided reading their texts alone (except in way of a preparation): if ever possible they read them in company of their friends. This was the famous and often quoted "verse chanting" (cf. Gustav Mahler, "The Song of the Earth" : "*Mitten in dem kleinen Teiche steht ein Pavillion aus weißem und aus grünem Porzelan…*"). However, the "verses" were not just chanted: they were discussed, and

interpreted in various ways, the more ways, the better. Each one of the participants contributed his favourite interpretation, gave his opinion, proposed, perhaps, a novel interpretation of the quoted pericope, or discovered the presence of a pun. And we can easily envision how, the wine helping, the interpretations became ever more rambunctious. Chinese love to laugh. "Verse chanting" was viewed as a civilized entertainment; and a ku-wen seminar may be entertaining even today – if done properly, leisurely, lovingly.

THE CONTENT

In approximately one hundred commented Couplets (Manchu and *DES MICHELS* have 104, *GILES* 89 Couplets) the *San tzu ching hsün ku* outlines the encyclopaedic knowledge of Confucianism: "some numbers and some letters" (數 shu[3], 文 wen[2]; cf. # XI) as it modestly claims. In fact, by "numbers" it means numerology, and it lists all sorts of things classified in appropriate numerological categories from THREE to TEN. As for the "letters", they comprise the so-called "four arsenals [of erudition] " 四 庫 ssu[4] ku[4], namely the Classics 經 ching[1]; the philosophers 子 tzu[3]; the historians 史 shih[3]; and literary collections 集 tsi[2.5] (these last ones being represented by the commending of a number of famous authors for their prowess in matters of learning).

The present study deals only with the ELEVEN initial couplets – for one must limit oneself. Also, this introductory part is of a more general interest. By its copious quoting it constitutes a good introduction to the Confucian Classics, hence, to the Chinese weltanschauung and to Sinology in general. The books most frequently quoted are the *Li chi* (a favourite of the Tai Ch'ing dynasty) and *MENCIUS*; but the rest of the Classics are also quoted: *Lun yü*, the *Odes*, the *Yi ching*, the *Shu ching*, and even the *Ch'un ts'iu* ... *HAN-FEI-TZU* is quoted and, among the heterodox, *CHUANG-TZU* and *LIEH-TZU.*

The formal arrangement of the introductory part, viz. of couplets # 1 - # XI, is decided by numerology. The arrangement is simple enough: TEN + ONE. In numerology

TEN signifies the fullness, the completeness; whence ELEVEN opens the view on new and wider horizons. In the introductory part under scrutiny, this numerological arrangement and its significance are evident and need no further explanation. (The best exposition of Chinese numerology is to be found in *Granet*.)

However, this method of counting the couplets, correct as it is, leads to absurd results if it is followed blindly. Couplet THREE, a *yang* number, tells of Mother Meng; couplet FOUR, a *yin* number, tells of the virtuous householder Tou Yen-shan and his five sons; couplet FIVE, the *yang* number which marks the central, the most important point, talks of careless fathers and bad teachers... Hence, we observe a shift of one unit. Aside from and beyond TEN + ONE, we must count Zero + NINE + ONE. In turn, we must divide the NINE couplets into THREE triads.

§ Zero, viz. the couplet # I_{1-2} , states the theoretical premises of Confucian education. – The commentary expounds its metaphysics, philosophy, ethics and aim which is to produce capable mandarins.

Note:
The word “mandarin” is derived, via the Portuguese, from the Sanskrit *mantrin,* “the one who has studied, the one who knows”. The mantrin was a king‘s minister. He was supposed to be a charismatic man: clairvoyant, or at least endowed with a sharp, penetrating mind and an encyclopaedic knowledge of all branches of divine and human science and wisdom. When the Portuguese reached China, they applied the Indian designation of high officers to their Chinese counterparts, 官 kuan[1]. In Sinology, when we refer to mandarins, we make a distinction which the Chinese do not make, but which is essential for us westerners. We distinguish between a State official, a functionary, on one hand; and a mandarin on the other. We see them as two different things. A mandarin is primarily someone who holds a mandarinal degree (NINE degrees: one, highest; nine,

lowest), which essentially reflects the degree of honour due to its holder who does not necessarily exercise a function. The man who successfully passed his State examinations, possessed an academic title ("bachelor, licentiate, doctor" 秀才 hsiu[4] ts'ai[2] "blooming talent", 舉人 hü[3] jen[2] "graduate", 進士 tsin[4] shih[4] "promoted know-all"). This entitled him to be appointed as a State officer. The post would correspond to his academic degree, and a certain mandarinal degree would be attached to the post which – once again – might or might not include a function. In fact, there is no administration on earth that would not have a comparable ranking system for its State employees in one form or another. However, what distinguishes the Chinese mandarin from a Western official is that he was the warrant of State orthodoxy: he studied it, he passed examinations on it, he was the embodiment of it and, consequently, the embodiment of Imperial authority. According to his rank the mandarin partook in the religious functions of the Emperor, performing at an appropriately lower level the Imperial sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. He also partook in the Imperial charismata such as clairvoyance, omnipotence and the complete science of the script. 神鬼 shen[2] kui[3], gods and demons, no less than humans, yielded to his transcendental authority (DES ROTOURS, *Examens*, p. 4).

After the preliminary couplet # I, here now starts the first triad of the series of the NINE. This first triad outlines the curriculum of Confucian education. Confucian education begins immediately after the future mandarin's conception; and the first triad gives: a) generalities; b) a shining example of maternal education; c) a shining example of paternal education.

§ ONE (cf. couplet # II) : *yin* and *yang* are not yet divided. The couplet addresses itself to both parents. The commentary, in its initial part (# 2-A-F), addresses the father, urging him to take the education of his son to heart, and gives excellent reasons as to why he should do so. In its second part the commentary outlines the education incumbent on the mother: first, the intra-uterine education of the embryo (# 2-G-J); then

the extra-uterine education (# 2-K-O). Maternal education ends when, on reaching the age of approximately eight or ten years, the boy enters the world of men (# 2-P). The final part of the commentary (# 2-Q-T) urges the parents together to give their undivided attention to their son‘s initial education – otherwise the immediate, no less than the long term results will be disappointing.

§ TWO (cf. couplet # III_{1-2}): a yin number. The couplet tells the story of Mother Meng: her "moving thrice" (# III_1) and the drastic lesson through which she cured the laziness of her rascal son (# III_2).

– # III_1: The texts report contradictory traditions. This makes things somewhat confusing, the more so because, in truly Chinese fashion, the appalling circumstances of Mother Meng‘s life would not be exposed bluntly. When referring to these, our texts express themselves tactfully, yet unambiguously for whomever listens carefully. The greater our efforts to disentangle the narrative and to picture the disgrace through which Mother Meng had to live, the greater and more admirable this aristocratic lady becomes.

– # III_2: Once again we are faced with contradictory traditions. The commentary reports a number of what I first mistook for school boys‘ gibes. My reaction was to pass them over in silence, particularly since they did not strike me as being in the very best taste. Nor did I want to hurt feelings by appearing to joke about Mother Meng whose memory is honoured in many Chinese families. However, since Master Wang felt it appropriate to report these traditions, my second reaction was: "Who am I to hide them away? " 述 而 不 作 shu$^{4.5}$ erh^{2} pu$^{4.5}$ tso$^{4.5}$ "I transmit and do not invent" (*Lun yü*, *HY* 11.7.1; *C.*, p. 136; *L.*, p. 195). The Sinologue is supposed to explicate his texts to the best of his understanding, not to show himself more prudish than the Han-lin Academicians of the Imperial Censorate who – whether laughing or frowning – issued the imprimatur (cf. Preface, line f). Going carefully over my texts, over and over again, I came to the conclusion that what I first took for gibes did actually represent the original, most certainly the authentic version of the story. The

facts shocked later generations, who either whisked them away or (as usual in China) absconded them in a second level of the text, whence only a minute analysis of the commentaries could draw them to light.
§ THREE (cf. couplet # IV_{1-2}): a *yang* number heralding manliness and success. Appropriately the couplet and the commentary tell of a father who, thanks to his uncompromisingly strict teaching methods, enabled his five sons to rise to the highest ranks of Imperial bureaucracy.

The second triad sets out a) the pitfalls of education; b) the characteristics of a good education; and c) the triumph of a good education.
§ FOUR (cf. couplet # V_{1-2}): the square of the *yin* number TWO, a nefarious number heralding evil, failure, and every sort of vice. The couplet and its commentary name the most common obstacles to a successful education: the nonchalance of the father and the laziness, and/or the cruelty, of the teacher. They may result in the student loosing his motivation.
§ FIVE (cf. couplet # VI): a *yang* number, the number of the MIDDLE, of what is most important. The couplet addresses itself to the student, telling him that, in matters of learning and academic success, his proper motivation is paramount. – The commentary quotes a number of "motivation songs" authored by pre-eminent Confucian scholars.
§ SIX (cf. couplet # VII): this is the sixth in the series of NINE couplets dealing with education. SIX is *yin*, like any other even number, hence bad. However, the numerological value of SIX is complex. It calls for explanations.

SIX, written vertically as two times THREE solid bars, gives the highly auspicious first of the sixty four hexagrams 卦 kua[4] of the *Yi ching* : 乾 ch'ien[2] "surging energy" (according to the *Shuo wen*, *M.* 1.204.I.9 = *W.* 117D); lexicographical value: "Heaven, its influence; active, diligent, restless; male, man, the ruler." (*Cd.*, p. 393a; *M.*, loc. cit., I). *WIL.,* p. 369-370 (*HY.,* p. 1 a-b) "The Creative": *The Surging Energy is strong; it works sublime success, furthering through*

perseverance; great indeed is the sublimity of the Surging Energy to which all beings owe their beginning and which permeates all heaven – and many other oracles, all auguring a brilliant mandarinal career and a high position at Court.

SIX = 乾 ch‘ien^2 means “beginning”, hence, of necessity, “the end” of something else. This SIXth couplet ends the exposition of the theory of education; and the commentary closes this chapter within a youth‘s life by quoting the Capping ceremony, a rite of passage. The jade has been polished to utter brilliance; the young man has passed his first State examinations. He is ready to start his mandarinal career.

He is also ready to be given a wife (cf. # 6-B, Note). The commentary insists on the sexual symbolism common to “jade polishing” and to the hexagram 乾 ch‘ien^2. Just as in # 4_1-B our attention was drawn to the imminence of puberty, so it is now drawn to the sexual maturity of the “Capped” young man and his duty to perpetuate the family line. The *Yi ching* (sixth explication) assigns the quality 健 chien^4 “potent, vigorous, untiring” to the hexagram ch‘ien^2; the horse is its emblem (cf. # 3_1-B, first allusion). Further allusions to the hexagram ch‘ien^2 will follow in # 8-C, second quotation.

The third triad, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE (cf. the couplets # VIII, # IX, # X) deals with the moral fruit of education. The boy must demonstrate sociability, viz. he must integrate himself into society. 孝 hsiao^4 “filial piety”, and 弟 t‘i^4 “brotherly piety” are the two pillars, the essence, of Chinese ethics.

a) Filial piety includes the obligation to be subservient to both parents. This, in turn, includes the obligation to be successful: presently, to be successful in studies; later on, to be successful in career; and this, in turn, includes the practice of all the secondary virtues conductive to success.

b) Brotherly piety includes subservience to one‘s elder brother (-s) and, by extension, subservience to one‘s elders in general; it also includes faithful attachment to one‘s friends, viz. comrades, colleagues, business associates. In the exercise of Chinese virtues, filial piety has absolute priority. A disaster

like the one described at the end of couplet # X is morally justifiable only if both parents are no longer alive, or if they expressly approve of the hazardous undertaking.

THE LITERARY STYLES

San tzu ching hsün ku (see its text at the end of the book) is the title given to the *San tzu ching* (full size characters) in conjunction with Master Wang's commentary (halve size characters). The text is composed of rhyming couplets on the one hand, and of prose on the other, which, respectively, face us with two literary styles: the "hieroglyphic" style and the "hieratic" style.

Literary Chinese includes three basic styles:

a) At the lower end there is the "demotic" style 文 話 wen^2 hua^4 "the literary vernacular". Its semantic is polysyllabic, viz. it uses the word formations of spoken Chinese. These are predominantly binomes. The syntax of the demotic style equals that of spoken Chinese, viz. it follows the pattern "subject - verb - object" (as does English). With a bit of practice, this style may be understood by the ear. It was used for writing literature of entertainment (novels, theatre) and was considered incompatible with the dignity of a scholar.

b) The "hieratic" style 文 言 wen^2 yen^2 the "literary language". This is a mixed style, viz. its semantic is predominantly monosyllabic; its syntax follows closely the syntax of spoken Chinese. A literatus was able to understand this style by the ear, at least partly, providing he was familiar with the subject matter. It was used for long texts, such as documents, annals, philosophical treaties … and for commentaries. This is the style normally referred to as "literary Chinese".

c) The third style, the first in excellence and the most primitive one, is the "hieroglyphic" style 古 文 ku^3 wen^2 , the "venerable style" (or, "the archaic style"). It is radically different from the two preceding styles. Its semantic is strictly monosyllabic; its syntax is the reverse of spoken

Chinese, in that the preceding determines the subsequent : A determines B, B determines C, and C is "what it is all about". Hence, there are no long sentences. In fact, there are no sentences at all, only sequences of kanjis we properly should call syntagm's. A text written in hieroglyphic style cannot be understood by the ear.

THE KANJI

In the demotic style (wen hua) and, to some extent, in the hieratic style (wen yen), the kanji functions as a graphical sign, as a cipher representing a word. This, however, does not correspond to its nature: it comes from the Buddhists and results from the need to translate Indian sermons and instructions in such a way, that the Chinese faithful would understand them when read aloud at public worship. This process took place, as commonly supposed, during the Later Han period, viz. the first two centuries A.D.. However, in essence the kanji is not a cipher for a word: it is a cipher for the thing itself. It is an emblem. (*WEBSTER*: "a visible symbol of a thing, idea […]; object or representation that stands for or suggests something else.") Example: Located at a crossroad, it is a red octagon that says "STOP". A "stop sign", indeed. But what does it mean? It means, that, A) if you are driving a car, and see the sign facing the opposite of your direction, you must 1) stop; 2) look out; 3) go ahead. B) The sign is there in the interest of 4) safety; or you 5) risk 6) an accident, or at least a 7) ticket … &c. C) However, in case the stop sign faces your own direction, you are supposed 9) to ignore it. D) And if you are on foot, regardless on whether the sign stands on the left or on the right side of the street, it means that you should 10) cross the street here. Hence, a stop sign conveys a number of meanings according to the context; but in all instances it is referred to as a "stop sign". A comparison is always limping, but the stop sign gives a fairly accurate idea of the polyvalence of the kanjis, including their tendency to mean a thing as well as its contrary. Hence, if you were to limit the significance of a kanji to the first meaning listed in the dictionary (which is normally the acceptation most

frequently used in the spoken language), you would be as mistaken as if you would park your car at the stop sign. There are roughly fifty thousand official kanjis (and there may be thirty thousand inofficial kanjis in addition). And each one is endowed with numerous meanings, and most of them with several pronunciations. Through the wizardry of his art, a great author succeeds in producing a text that can be read on different levels : two, at least, but more often three, namely the narrative of a landscape description, an erotic level, and a political level – but there could be more levels still to be discovered, all distinct from each other and perfectly intelligible to the perceptive scholar.

Metaphysically, the kanji is the essence of any one thing on earth and beyond. The kanji is not subject to change (易 yi$^{4.5}$ “the changes” whose mechanism and movements are explained in the oracles of the *Book of Changes*): it stands in the universe of ideas; hence, it cannot be declined, nor can it be conjugated: it is independent of time and grammatical functions. Because of its absolute, unchangeable nature, the kanji is more real than the thing which it represents. It must be read with the copula: 麟 也 “it is a lin. Period.” (viz. the monster on our book cover). Because of its emblematic nature, the kanji cannot be translated into any human language, including Chinese. It always needs to be interpreted: 訒 jen^{4} “The pondering of words / kanjis” – viz. the pondering of a kanji‘s etymology, of its various pronunciations, rhymes and meanings including the significances derived from quotations or allusions. The universe of the Confucian literatus is twofold: the phenomenal world which is “false” 虛 hsü^{1} (空 k‘ung^{1} “void”, as the Buddhists say), and the unchangeable world of the kanjis. Numerology holds the universe together in an orderly way.

THE “SIXWRIT” 六書 LU$^{4.5}$ SHU^{1}

Physically, morphologically, the kanjis may be classified into four categories:

First: “pictograms”, viz. a graphic depiction of the signified object: they are very few (cf. below, No. 1 and 2); – second: more numerous are the “ideograms” which express complex things by means of a combination of kanjis (cf. below, Nos. 3 and 5a); – third: most kanjis, however, are “phonograms”, meaning that they function like a picture riddle, a rebus: they are used for their sound rather than for what their form would suggest (cf. below, Nos. 5b and 6); – fourth: finally, there is the vastly predominant group of the logograms, viz. kanjis which indicate the meaning together with the sound of the spoken word (cf. below, No. 4).

Native Chinese philology distinguishes between:
§ A : two sorts of kanjis,
a) 文 wen^{2}, the simple kanjis (cf. below Nos. 1 and 2);
b) 字 tzu^{4}, the composite kanjis (cf. below, Nos. 3 and 4).
§ B : six types of kanjis, namely “the sixwrit” (cf. *M.*, 2.1453.331; *W.*, p. 10) which includes:
– four types according to shape (cf. below , Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4);
– two types according to use (cf, below, Nos. 5 and 6).
Namely:
– 1) 象 形 hsiang^{4} hsing^{2} “image to the likeness”, e.g. 日 ji$^{4.5}$ “the sun”; 手 shou^{3} “the (right) hand”; 萬 wan^{4} “the scorpion”.
– 2) 指 事 chih^{3} shih^{4} “the matter is indicated”, e.g. 上 shang^{4} “above”; 三 san^{1} “three”; 丿 p‘ieh$^{1.5}$ “moving from the upper right to the lower left”.
– 3) 會 意 hui^{4} yi^{4} “notions combined”, e.g.
武 wu^{3} “martial” < 戈 ko^{1} + 止 chih^{3} : halberd (at) foot;
士 shih^{4} “the scholar” < 一 yi^{1} + 十 shih$^{2.5}$: [a man who knows everything included between] ONE and TEN = “a know-all”.
意 yi^{4} “the meaning” < 心 sin^{1} + 音 yin^{1} : that which was intended by the emitted sound.

– 4) 諧 聲 hsiai^2 sheng^1 “according to the sound”, are kanjis endowed with a phonetic element together with an element indicating the meaning. For instance, 里 li^3 “the village”, used as a phonetic element, appears in: 狸 li + dog > li^2 “the fox”; 鯉 li + fish > li^3 “the carp”; 娌 li + the woman > li^3 “the sisters-in-law”; 裏 the li inside a clothing 衣 > li$^{3.4}$ “the lining of a garment”; & c. *mult*.

– 5) 轉 注 chuan^3 chu^4 “branching off and changing direction”:

a) Derived tracing: e. g.

老 lao^3 “old” / 考 k‘ao^3 “old age”: common upper element “the beard” (a pictogram); lower element hua^4 “to change” (from black to white) / lower element ch‘iao^3 “to wheeze” (with asthma);

王 wang^2 “the king” / 玉 yü^4 “jade”: the king + a diacritical dot (jade is the royal stone); 王 hsiü^5 “to carve jade”.

父 fu^4 “the father” originally shows (in 小 篆 hsiao^3 chuan^4 the “small seal script”) a “hand” holding a “stick”, sign of authority / 君 chün^1 “the lord” shows “the father” + “the mouth” (for eating a special diet and instructing the populace).

b) Derived meaning: e.g.

网 wang^3 “a fishing net” → “to catch in a net, to take for oneself, a predicament, error, disorder, regardless, to braid” &c.;

長 ch‘ang^2 “long”, chang^3 “to grow tall; the chief”;

令 ling^4 “the law, the rule”, ling ^{2} “the servant”.

– 6) 假 借 chia^3 tsieh^4 “the false borrowings”. They are defined as 一 字 兩 用 yi$^{1.4}$ tzu^4 liang^3 yung^1 “one kanji several meanings”. For no apparent reason but fortuitous homophony these kanjis were given acceptations totally unrelated to their actual meaning. They function like a rebus. E. g. 哥 ko^1 “to sing” / “the elder brother” ; 字 tzu^4 “to suckle a child” / “a kanji” ; 有 yu^3 “a lunar eclipse” (viz. a demon‘s “hand” = the upper part of the kanji, passing over the “moon”)

/ “to be” (location) / “to have” ; 爲 wei^{2} “a female ape” / “to be” (definition) / “to do” ; 也 yeh^{3} “the vagina” / “also, too” / a final particle ; 焉 yen^{1} the name of a yellow bird / “how?” &c., there are many of them. In Latin, a phenomenon of this sort is called *lucus a non lucendo*, viz. “*lucus* ‚a forest‘, because it does not *lucere* ‚shine‘”, meaning, an absurd etymology.

The above disquisitions on the “sixwrit” are neither new nor original; they are, however, extremely important for a correct understanding of written Chinese in general, and the hieroglyphic, the exalted style in particular. WIEGER‘s *Chinese characters* should be the student‘s constant companion. The etymologies and the “small seal script” (by which seemingly abstract kanjis become meaningful) are particularly useful, as well as the chapter on “phonetic series” which helps decoding hsiai^{2} sheng^{1}‘‘s. These are oftentimes but chia^{3} tsieh^{4} ‘s with a diacritical radical added to them; and radicals should always be questioned.

*

PS.: The student may wonder why I am using a modified Wade-Giles transliteration rather than ‘Pinyin’ which presently (c. 2000 A.D.) appears to be standard. He may forgive me. The reason for my choice is simple: a young Sinologue cannot ignore Wade-Giles. Too much sinology has been written using it. A mastery in spoken Chinese is one thing; but Sinology is quite something else. Let then good old-fashioned Sinology keep its Wade-Giles.

For the same pedagogical reason I use and quote the original Japanese version of MOROHASHI’s dictionary (rather than its Chinese translation). If he has not done it yet, let the student befriend himself with the idea that he cannot do well in Chinese without at least some knowledge of Japanese. As a seasoned Sinologue, I urge you: learn Japanese; and the sooner you start learning it, the better for you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 三子經訓詁 *San tzu ching hsün ku* “San tzu ching explicated” was published in Paris, 1882, by Abel DES MICHELS, professor at the interpreters‘ school (*École des Langues orientales vivantes*), for the profit of future colonial officials in “Indochine Française” (cf. Bibliography). His book includes the Chinese text, a transliteration of its Chinese Mandarin pronunciation, a transliteration of its Annamese Mandarin pronunciation, and a double translation, viz. a word by word analysis, and a translation in current French.

Paris, 1964. On receiving my appointment at Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind., I was informed that (apart from Tibetan which I had taught before and which presented no problem) I was expected to teach “Chinese literary prose”. I put my *DES MICHELS* into my travelling bag. This book – I rightly thought – may serve many purposes: its rich, meaningful text may be used for an introductory course in classic Chinese; it also could serve as an intermediate level textbook; and, if need be (at that time unlikely, but at any event), I could use it for a seminar in Confucian classics, or in Chinese philosophy, for Ph.D. candidates. I taught the *San tzu ching hsün ku* on these three levels off and on throughout my career.

Publishing my seminar notes, I acknowledge my indebtedness to all my students who, over the years, participated in the “*San tzu ching* seminar”. By their own painstaking preparations and researches they greatly increased the quantity and improved the quality of my notes until we approached a level of understanding comparable – I hope – to that of a literatus of yore. However, it is impossible to fathom the depth of one‘s own ignorance.

At long last, I am now complying with the repeated injunctions of my respected colleague, Professor Dr. J. P. Seaton, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As a former participant in this seminar, and one of its major

contributors, he was in a position to appreciate the educational value of the accumulated material, and he wanted to see it published. – More recently a similar request was expressed by Professor Dr. Michael Friedrich, my successor to the First Chair of Sinology (Language and Literature) of Hamburg University (Germany): “Since you identified all these quotations, please, pass your notes on to us.” This timely encouragement (I had just retired) gave me the start I needed. – I never could have published my notes in English (a language I rarely used during the last twenty five years) had I not been helped by my niece Marie Therese Jenkins (Cambridge, U.K.) who took upon herself the arduous, time-consuming task of correcting my prose. – The sinological part was corrected by Mr. Ken Koziol (San Fancisco), a former student and a faithful friend, – Mr. Joseph Alvermann, Purser/Safety Commissioner of the German Lufthansa, and amateur linguist, had come across my “Haenisch notes”. He liked them, but deplored the numerous typographical errors. There resulted an exchange of letters, upon which he offered to proofread my current manuscript. He proofread it at least three times. – Summer 2002 I presented the almost complete manuscript to Professor Seaton. He gave me his professional opinion, his valued comments and his conditional approval. – Bruno Lainé (Vienna), presently doctoral student in Mongolian studies, solved my computer problems and produced the camera ready typescript. To them goes my heart-felt gratitude for their encouragement and for their generous help without which my notes for the “*San tzu ching* seminar” would probably have remained forever in a drawer.

As for the various awkward formulations, errors, typos and howlers which the reader may find in this book, I beg for indulgence. They should be ascribed to my making last minute changes.

A final grateful acknowledgement goes to my respected colleague, Dr. Claudia Römer, Professor of Turkology, Editor of the WZKM (“Viennese journal of Oriental studies”), a dedicated student of Mongolian language and civilization. She provided this book with its present title.