

THE TITLE

三字經訓詁
san¹ tzu⁴ ching¹ hsün⁴ ku³

The three characters' classic explicated

> 詁 may be read either in the third tone or in the fourth. In the present combination it ought to be read in the third tone (cf. *Cd.*, p. 153a, 訓).

Vie adds editorial informations.

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MASTER WANG'S PREFACE

a) 宋儒王伯厚先生作三字經以課家塾

sung⁴ ju² wang² pei^{2.5} hou⁴ hsien¹ sheng¹
tso^{4.5} san¹ tzu⁴ ching¹ yi³ k'o⁴ chia¹ shu^{2.5}

b) 言簡義長. 詞明理晰

yen² chien³ yi⁴ ch'ang². ts'ih² ming² li³ hsi^{1.5}

c) 淹貫三才. 出入經史

yen¹ kuan⁴ san¹ ts'ai². ch'u^{1.5} ju^{4.5} ching¹ shih³

d_a) 誠蒙求之津逮

ch'eng² meng² ch'iu² chih¹ tsin¹ tai⁴

d_b) 大學之濫觴也

ta⁴ hsioh^{2.5} chih¹ lan⁴ shang¹ ye³

a) *The Confucian Scholar of Sung [times], Master Wang "Elder Brother Faithful", made [this] trimetrical primer for the use of [his own] family school.* b) *[It shows] terse language, yet deep meaning, clear expression, shining finish* c) *and a thorough understanding of [the science of] the Three Powers, as well as familiarity with the Classics and the Historians.* d_b) *It constitutes the modest start on the way to Great Learning* d_a) *[which is] the harbour of destination of the honest ambitions of youth.*

> 伯厚 “Elder Brother Faithful” is the “friends’ name” (字) of Wang Ying-lin 王應麟 (1223-1296). It alludes to the fabulous knowledge of this celebrated polymath. For a thorough understanding of this names, see the explication of Ode 11, at the very end of this book.

> 塾 “a school, a classroom”. The term refers to the large room located next to the entrance gate of family compounds. It frequently housed the 家塾, or 家學, the private “family school” (cf. # 3-L). The expression is drawn from *Li chi*, Hsioh chi, *HY*. 18/2 (C., II, p. 30, § 4): 古之教者家有塾
In olden times, there was a shu within the compounds of families which were teaching [their boys].

> 三才 “the Three Powers” are “Heaven, Earth, Man”, meaning a universal knowledge in natural sciences, as opposed to “letters”, namely “the Classics and the Historians”.

> 津逮 “reaching the ford, the harbour of destination” cf. *M.*, 6.17396.36.

> 濫觴 “it would overflow a goblet, – of the source of the Yangtze – yet it becomes a great river; used of a beginning of things.” *MTH.*, 3800.18.

e) 予不揣荒陋謬爲訓詁

f) 不無貽笑高明

g) 然於稚習之助

h) 庶或有小補云爾

yü² pu^{4.5} ch'uai³ huang¹ lou⁴ miu⁴ wei² hsün⁴ ku³

pu^{4.5} wu² yi² hsiao⁴ kao¹ ming²

jan² yü¹ chih⁴ hsi^{2.5} chih¹ chu⁴

shu⁴ huo^{4.5} you³ hsiao³ pu³ yün² erh³

e) *Unmindful of my grotesquely uncouth boorishness, I made explanatory notes.*

f) *These will cause my illustrious colleagues to laugh.*

g) *However, as an aid for training young students,*

h) *they may, perhaps, present some interest.*

Variant: I adopted the reading of dM and SC: 笑 hsiao⁴. Vie gives 誚 ts'iao⁴ “to frown on; to ridicule”. Hence, the illustrious colleagues may either *ridicule* Master Wang's “boorishness” (a rhetorical statement of humility); or they may *frown on* his occasional laughing at hallowed traditions; or they may enjoy his sense of humour. Whatever their feelings were, the Han-lin Academicians of the Imperial Censorate issued the imprimatur.

i) 歲在康熙丙午嘉平之吉

sui⁴ tsai⁴ k'ang¹ hsi¹ ping³ wu³ chia¹ p'ing² chih¹ chi^{2.5}

On the first day of the last moon of the year ping-wu [of the era] k'ang-hsi,

The year *ping-wu* of the era *k'ang-hsi* is A.D. 1666 (cf. *TCHANG*, p. 460); falso *GILES*, p. IV: 1786 which would be the year *ping-wu* of the era *ch'ien-lung*.

Variant: SC omits sui⁴ tsai⁴.

j) 詡菴王相晉升甫識

jen⁴ an¹ wang² hsiang¹ tsin⁴ sheng¹ fu³ shih⁴

I, Master Wang Tsin-sheng of the Cell “Where Words Are Pondered”, have written it.

Tsin-sheng is the “friends' name” of Master Wang; – 相 hsiang⁴, when inserted between the family name and the friends' name, is a honorific proper for teachers, meaning “guide, adjutant” (I opted for “Master”); – Jen-an is the name of Master Wang's studio: 詡 jen⁴, a great virtue among Confucianists, is quoted from *Lun yü*, *HY* 22/12/3, *C.*, p. 199; *L.*, p. 251-252; cf. the allusion, # 11-H). – In nearly identical, very short notes, the *Jen ming ttt*, p. 109b, and *M.*, 7.20823.524 (= 5.13898.49) list Wang hsiang⁴. His given name is not known. Falso *GILES*, p. IV “by a scholar named Wang Hsiang”; recte the Manchu version, and *DES MICHELS* (p. 235).

Variant: instead of jen⁴ an¹, SC gives 琅邪 lang² yeh³, a place name (see *Cd.*, p. 490 c.)

Note:

The Chinese reign title 康熙 corresponds to the Manchu *elhe taifin* and to the Mongol *engke amuɣulang*. These may be rendered as “peace”, but the word *elhe / engke* has, in addition, a connotation of “prosperity, felicity”. The Chinese version of the reign title allows a similar interpretation: “peace and prosperity” (in reverse order); however, it also means something else. The two kanjis jointly allude to the “Song of the Emperor” which closes the second part of the *Shu ching* (2.4.3.11: *L.*, p.89-90): 敕天之命惟時惟幾 “*At every moment, in every matter, I am attentive to Heaven's ordinances.*” and, later:

股肱喜哉 . 元首起哉 . 百工熙哉
 元首明哉 . 股肱良哉 . 庶事康哉

“When legs and arms are happy, the head is carried high, the hundred achievements are glorious.

When the head is intelligent, the arms and legs are good, the public business is smooth.”

Hence it appears that the Chinese version of the reign title actually means: “smooth administration [and] glorious achievements”. These being brought about by the intelligence of the emperor and the loyalty of his ministers, the kanjis are quoted in reverse order. And by “duck-and-drake” (q.v. p. 92) the Manchu emperor reminds his Chinese subjects that he is the recipient of the Heavenly mandate, and therefore their legitimate overlord.

> 喜 hsi³ “felicity”. When doubled, it becomes 囍, the symbol of matrimonial felicity, which is, in turn, symbolic of a happy cooperation between sovereign and minister.

However, as it stands, the Song also alludes to the fate of the Boy-Emperor. Let us recall a few dates: Emperor K'ang-Hsi's grandfather, Abahai, dies at the age of 56, during the 8th moon, 1643, at the very moment when he sets about supplanting the Ming dynasty. Fulin, his son, succeeds him. As an infant of 4/5 years he enters Peking during the 9th moon 1644, and the new reign title, *ijishûn-dasan* = *shun-chih*

順治 “submission and order”, is proclaimed on the 1st day of the 10th moon. At the age of 13/14 Fulin fathers the future emperor K'ang-Hsi, and dies in 1661 at the age of 23, when his successor to the imperial throne is barely ten years old. This means that during the crucial years of the conquest of the 中國 the “Land in the Middle” (China proper), the power of command rested with “the arms and the legs”, viz. the uncles. Twice these uncles ceded power to the legitimate heir. What admirable family discipline!

For the exact meaning of 順治, see *Li chi*, HY. 48/10 (C., II, p. 696-697). The compound occurs three times in a pericope which uses archery as a simile. Archery was the martial art which the Manchu dynasty esteemed and cultivated more than any other (cf. # 2-P, N.B. 2). For the Manchu proficient quoting from the *Li chi*, see Bischoff, “*Manchu imperial titles*”.