

麟之趾

THE FOOT OF THE LIN²

The monster shown on our book cover is a *lin*² (*M.*, 12.47690) as depicted in the *T'u shu chi ch'eng*. Strictly speaking it is the female of the 麒麟 *ch'i*² (*M.*, 12.47657). Hence the animal is often referred to, somewhat improperly, as a *ch'i-lin*, as if one would call a cow a “bullcow” (e.g. the famous Japanese beer “Kirin”). For its part, the *T'u shu chi ch'eng* implies, that there is no distinctive feature to a male *ch'i* as opposed to a female *lin*, and that we should consider the picture as representing a *chi* as well as a *lin*.

I have not yet encountered a *ch'i* all by himself: he does not occur in the Classics. The *lin*, on the contrary, is ubiquitous. My first encounter with her (it was definitely a female animal) dates back to 1956/57, when I was a student at Peking University. Peking University had recently been installed on the premises of the former Harvard-Yenching Institute, a grandiose area located near the Summer Palace of Empress Tz'u-hi (慈禧, 1835-1908). A life-size bronze statue of a *lin* adorned the palace gate.

The *lin* is one of the four transcendental animals (*ling*² 靈), together with the dragon (*lung*¹ 龍), the phoenix (*feng*⁴ 鳳), and the tortoise (*kui*¹ 龜). She is variously described as having one horn or several horns (ours has two horns, one on her forehead, one on the back of her head). A *lin*'s horn is characteristically covered with flesh. Her body is said to resemble that of a stag; it may be covered with scales or with multicoloured fur; her hoofs are those of an ox, or of a horse, or they may be shaped like human hands. Hence, there may be uncertainty about the shape of a *lin* (cf. *Mth.*, 534; *EBERHARD*, p. 68-70). However, she is unanimously acclaimed as a highly auspicious animal, an emblem of all goodness and benevolence. Her appearance heralds a golden

age. She announced the birth of Confucius (*DORÉ*, vol. XIII, p. 11 & fig. 3); her death foreshadowed the Master's demise (*ibid.* p. 87 & fig. 65; cf. the end of the *Ch'un-ts'iu*, *L.*, p. 833, 835).

The earliest mention of the *lin* occurs in Ode 11 (to be studied below), in which she metaphorically represents “the modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady”, the spouse of Wen Wang (文王 = Chou kung 周公 ca. 1100 B.C.), whose feminine merits are sung in Ode 1. Next interpretative step: the ruler-and-minister relationship being equated to that of husband and wife, the *lin* symbolizes the virtuous Confucian mandarin. Moreover, since in China (as everywhere) a male child is regarded as a potential messiah, the *lin* stands for “male offspring”. In this case, one may find her mounted by an infant boy carrying a lotus, lien² 蓮. This expresses by homophony the wish for “many [boys] in a row”, lien² 聯 (*EBERHARD*, p. 69), and we may add: many boys who will become mandarins.

Concluding our exegesis of the “Trimetrical Classic” in the same way as we started it; in order, also, to fully understand the names (ming² 名 and tzu⁴ 字) of the putative author of the *San tzu ching*, let us explicate the Ode 11. It is an ode in praise of the mandarin; and yet commentary and subcommentary both attract our attention to the poem's sad overtones: the difference between the ideal (level A) and reality (level B).

麟之趾。關雎之應也。關雎之化行。則天下無犯非禮。

雖衰世之公子。皆信厚。如麟趾之時也。關雎之時。以麟為應。後世

雖衰。猶存。關雎之化者。君無以宗族。猶尚振振然。有似麟應之時。無以過也。○麟之趾。振振

公子。與也。箋。趾。足也。麟信而應禮。以足至者也。振振。信厚也。箋。亦與者。喻今公子亦信厚。與禮相應。有

似於真麟。○于嗟麟兮。于。嗟。歎辭。○麟之定。振振公姓。

定。題也。公姓。訂。于。嗟。麟兮。麟之角。振振公族。麟角所以

表其德也。公族。公同祖也。箋云。于。嗟。麟兮。麟角之末。有肉。示有武。而不用。

麟之趾三章章三句

Ode 11
(cf. *L.*, p. 19)

The “Little preface“:

The text:

麟之趾關雎之應也

lin² chih¹ chih³ kuan¹ tsü¹ chih¹ ying⁴ yeh³

“The Foot of the lin” is a sequel to [the ode] “Alternating song of a male and of a female osprey” (= Ode 1).

關雎之化行則天下無犯非禮

kuan¹ tsü¹ chih¹ hua⁴ hsing⁴ tse^{2.5} t'ien¹ hsia⁴ wu² fan⁴ fei¹ li³

By virtue of the civilizing influences of the alternating songs, there were no transgressions in all the world, nor was there absence of Ceremonies. This was the golden age of Wen-wang 文王. The alternate songs of the male and female osprey stand for the harmonious cooperation between the ruler and the mandarin, and hence, for a perfect administration. The moral demeanour of the populace and its conforming in all things to the rules of Chinese orthopraxy are considered the result of a correct administration.

雖衰世之公子皆信厚如麟趾之時也

sui^{1.2} shuai¹ shi⁴ chih¹ kung¹ tzu³

chieh¹ hsin⁴ hou⁴ ju² lin² chih³ chih¹ shih² yeh³

All the sons of [that] prince, although they may live in degenerate ages of history, are as sincere and faithful as in the days which were [sung] in “The foot of the lin”. Viz. to the present day, the ideal mandarin conforms his conduct to the example set by the queen celebrated in the First Ode.

Commentary:

關雎之時以麟爲應

kuan¹ tsü¹ chih¹ shih² yi³ lin² wei² ying⁴

The times to which [the poem] “Alternating song” [refer us] were in accordance with [those in which] a lin [did appear].

後世雖衰猶存關雎之化者

hou⁴ shih² sui^{1.2} shuai¹ yu² ts'un² kuan¹ tsü¹ chih¹ hua⁴ che³

Later periods, although they were degenerate, still retained charismatic men [such as those allegorically described] in the "Alternating songs":

君之宗族猶尚振振然

chün¹ chih¹ tsung¹ tsu^{2.5} yu² shang⁴ chen⁴ chen⁴ jan²

[namely, whenever some] noble clan practiced to a degree equal to [Wen wang's wife] the quality of being faithful [to the ruler].

有似麟應之時無以過也

yu³ ssu⁴ lin² ying⁴ chih¹ shih² wu² yi³ kuo⁴ yeh³

[Such circumstances] can compare with periods that followed [the apparition of] a lin, [to times] when no transgressions occurred.

The Ode:

St. 1, lines 1-2:

麟之趾 . 振振公子

lin² chih¹ chih³ . chen¹ chen¹ kung¹ tzu³

The foot of the lin: – The honest sons of the prince,

The ideal Confucian mandarin, spiritual son of Chou kung, is symbolized by the *lin*; the commentary will define the symbolism of her foot (see below, 2).

> 振振 chen¹ chen¹ occurs elsewhere in the Classics with the meanings “brilliant, numerous, generous, beneficial” (*Cd.*, sub voc., p. 830c); the commentary will gloss it differently; and the subcommentary will attract our attention to its ambiguity (cf. below).

The commentary of Mao:

1) 興也 ; 2) 趾足也 ; 3) 麟信而應禮以足至者也 ; 4) 振振信厚也

1) *This is an allegory.*

À propos Ode 70 (cf. # I), I proposed, as a B-level translation: *The vagina was enjoyed.* This baroque interpretation also holds true in the present context. The virtuous mandarin

equates to the *lin* which equates to “the modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady”, the spouse of Wen Wang referred to in Ode 1. Hence, the virtuous mandarin is an ideal “mate” for our prince.

2) *A foot is a foot*, and 趾 means nothing else. 足, on the contrary, has many meanings akin to meaning of 振振 (see above): “abundant, to have/to provide abundance; sufficient, to be content with what is sufficient; capable, worthy, meritorious”. The ideal mandarin, “honest son of the prince” is endowed with these beneficial qualities of the *lin*.

3) *The lin is a sincere observant of the Ceremonies: she reaches perfection by means of her foot* – meaning, through the excellent qualities implied by the kanji 足. On a symbolic level, the poem alludes to the peculiarity of the *lin* of never damaging a living creature, animal or plant, either by eating it or by stepping on it. A *lin* lives on stony ground and feeds on dead leaves only.

4) 振振 means “sincere”. This meaning is common to both kanjis, hsin⁴ and hou⁴: a normal definition by synonymy. If one wishes to render hsin⁴ hou⁴ with two words, one may think of “sincere and faithful”. Legge wonders in a footnote why Mao has, a moment ago (Ode 5), glossed this same chen¹ chen¹ with 仁厚. Answer: Mao does not give a lexicographic definition of chen¹ chen¹ (which we have given above): he indicates the prerequisites of such felicitous circumstances; and these are not the same in Ode 5 as in Ode 11: in Ode 5 chen¹ chen¹ applies to the intercourse of the “locusts” (viz. the mandarins) with each other, hence the need for the eminently social virtue jen², ideally the virtue of their caste (cf. #3₂-L, note); Ode 11, on the other hand, speaks of the relation of a *lin* with its prince: he should not be cheated.

箋云: *The subcommentary* (of Chen K’ang-ch’eng) says:

興者喻今公子亦信厚

[Ode 11, by way of an] *allegory, illustrates the fact that faithful “sons of prince” (= the ideal mandarin) could exist even in our days and times.*

與禮相應有似於麟

Were they only to practice the Ceremonies wholeheartedly (yü⁴), and were they to cooperate harmoniously (ying⁴) with each other: they would bring about [a felicity] comparable to that of [the appearance of] a lin.

[振] *sounds like* 真 chen¹, in the first tone, “true, sincere, genuine”. Rejected meaning: chen⁴, in the fourth tone: “to busy, to agitate oneself; to frighten, to terrorize”... which a *lin* never does, but mandarins quite often – to each other and to the populace, alas!

Level B: translation: *The lin [= the mandarins], they are the greedy (足): extortionist, terrorizing (振 振 “chen⁴”) sons of the prince.*

St. 1, line 3:

于嗟麟兮

hsü¹ tsieh¹ lin¹ hsi²

Ah! They are the lin! (LEGGE)

Oh! la licorne! (Cd. sub voc. 于). Both interpretations are admissible; preference, however, must be given to that of Legge: Ode 11 sings the virtues of the ideal mandarin for which the *lin* (or the virtuous queen) is but an allegory.

The commentary of Mao:

于嗟歎辭: *the expression hsü¹ tsieh¹ is a sigh.* It is an exclamation of sorrow. This sorrowful aspect is underscored by the hsi², characteristic of the *Li Sao*, the lament of the righteous minister. Ideal mandarins who deserve to be likened to a *lin*, are rare – *alas!* Mao implies here what Chen K’ang-ch’eng insinuated when telling us to make sure to read 振 like 真 chen¹.

[于] 音吁: 于 (normally read yü²), *sounds like* 吁 hsü¹ “to be astonished, surprised; a sigh.”; 吁 is an exclamation of surprise and dismay. If we take all these innuendos into consideration (and by shifting the “mouth” radical from 差 to 于) we may read the Ode’s “sigh” as 吁 嗟 麟 兮 (yü² ch’a¹) *My! Are they but the perversion of a lin. Alas!*

> 差貸也 : ch'a¹ means 貸 erh⁴ “error” (*Shuo wen*).

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St. 2, lines 1-2:

麟之定 . 振振公姓

lin² chih¹ ting⁴ . chen¹ chen¹ kung¹ hsing⁴

The forehead of the lin: – *The honest grandsons of the prince*, I found no mention of the *lin*'s forehead in any of the mythologies I consulted. Mao gives no explanation (unlike for St. 1, “the foot”, and for St. 3, “the horn”); Legge assumes that the forehead is mentioned here because the *lin* “does not butt with it”. Would butting not rather befit her horn (St. 3)? In fact, how could a *lin* butt with her forehead when it has a horn in the middle of it. Since Mao appears to consider the symbolism self-explanatory, I suggest that “the forehead of the *lin*” signifies the wisdom of the ideal mandarin, as defined below, 3).

The commentary of Mao:

1) 定題也 ; 2) 公姓公同姓 ; 3) [定] 音訂

1) ting⁴ means “the forehead” (t'i²). Both Legge and *Cd.* (sub voc.) accept this definition. It appears to be a *hapax legomenon* (cf. *M.*, 3.7109.9), possibly for the sake of the rhyme. The *Shuo wen* glosses 定 with 安 “peace” which, assuredly, is fine, as it agrees with St. 3; it is not, however, a part of the *lin*'s body. Later dictionaries gloss ting⁴ with 頂 = 顛 both ting³ “*sommet de la tête*”, and with 顛 ting⁴ “the forehead”.

2) 公姓 are persons who share the same family name with the prince. Legge, in a footnote (= *Cd.*, sub voc. = *M.*, 3.6178.6) insists that the term hsing⁴ is often used for “grandsons”. This interpretation is obviously correct since it is in agreement with St. 1 and St. 3.

3) 定 sounds like 訂. The kanji 定 only has this one pronunciation, ting⁴ – whereas 訂 has three pronunciations: hence, consult the *Shuo wen*! In *M.*, 10.35211.1, we read: 訂 ting⁴ 平議也 p'ing² yi⁴ “to judge, to criticize, to censure” (=

to remind them of 定 “rules”). As in Ode 70 (cf. # 1₁), we are invited to interpret the phonetic definition according to its lexicographic meaning: a *lin* (viz. the righteous mandarin) *disapproves* [of the aforementioned extortionist practices of his colleagues]; he also may, if necessary, *criticise* the ruler. This was viewed as an important function of the righteous mandarin (as documented by the “Ninesongs” of the *Ch’u tz’u*).

St. 2, line 3: the text is identical with that of St. 1, verse 3; the previous commentary keeps its validity.

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St.3, lines 1-2:

麟之角. 振振公族

lin² chih¹ chio^{2.5} . chen¹ chen¹ kung¹ tsu^{2.5}

The horn of the lin: – The honest tribe of the prince,

The commentary of Mao:

1) 麟角所以表其德也 ; 2) 公族共同祖也

1) *The horn of the lin is a sign of her (social, intellectual, sexual...) potency.*

2) *“The tribe of the prince” is [formed by] all those [who boast] him as their ancestor.*

箋云: *The subcommentary (of Chen K’ang-ch’eng) says:*

麟角之末有肉示有武而不用

The tip of the lin’s horn is of flesh. This indicates that, although warlike, she does not use it.

... for, by virtue of her 德, she will prevent violence.

> 肉 ju^{4.5} “meat; soft, feeble”; jou⁴ “fat, obese”.

St. 3, line 3: the text is identical with that of St. 1 (and St. 2), line 3; the previous commentary keeps its validity.

Notice: In the first Stanza, level B, the vice of the vicious mandarin was a lexicographical trick, a “false borrowing”

(chia tsieh): as suggested by the commentaries, the kanji took an other meaning . In Stanza 2 and 3, the vice consists in a perversion of the virtue itself, hence, in a malicious interpretation of the text (as recommended by Confucius, # 1₁-A, Ode 70, the third surprise):

- St. 2: *criticism* may be praiseworthy, sometimes, if kept within proper limits “where mercy and truth have met each other; where justice and peace have kissed” (cf. Psalm 84:11). But this is seldom the case.

- St. 3 Also, to be peace loving is certainly a virtue, but not when it turns into *impotence* and *cowardice* – as suggested by the coat of *fat* that covers her *soft* horn.

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Aftertitle:

麟之趾 三章章三句

“The foot of the lin“: 3 stanzas, 3 lines to each stanza.

The rhyming pattern according to the *Chi yün*:

趾 chih³ and 子 tzu³ rhyme 紙 chih³ (“paper”);

麟 lin² rhymes 真 chen¹ (“true, sincere”);

定 ting⁴ rhymes 徑 ching⁴ (“footpath”), and

姓 hsing⁴ rhymes 敬 ching⁴ (“respect”)

角 chio⁵ and 族 tzu⁵ rhyme 屋 wu⁵ (“house”)

AAB, CDB, EEB.

Not being a paleophonetician, my impression is, that the Chinese rhyme, quite often, relates to the meaning rather than to the sound.

So much for the *lin*. As for the given name (名) of the putative author of the *San tzu ching*, (王) 應 麟 Ying-lin, it is evidently derived from the commentary on the preface to Ode 11. We may interpret it as “[the offshoot of the noble Wang clan] who conforms to genuine mandarin traditions”.

The “friends’ name” Pei-hou (伯厚), on the other hand, is derived from the “Little preface” and from Mao's commentary

on the first stanza: 信厚; and from the fact, that Wang Ying-lin had a younger brother*. We may therefore interpret it as “Elder Brother Faithful”, or “Elder Brother Reliable”, meaning in our case, that each and every one of his literary quotations, or allusions, can be trusted as to its wording, as to its meaning (-s), as to its textual reference (-s).

*) This younger brother (he is not much known, for he died relatively young, 1230-1275) was equally learned and called, *more sinico*, in a way analogue to his elder brother Wang Ying-lin, Wang Ying-feng⁴ (王應鳳) “who conforms to the male phoenix”. For the general significance of the “phoenix”, see # 10-K, appendix. In the present context, the feng stands parallel to the lin in that

a) both are transcendental animals,

b) both occur in the *Odes*: respectively Ode 11; and Ode 252:7.8,9, *L.*, p. 493-494,

c) and – as the lin is an emblem for the ideal mandarin – the feng is the emblem for a young scholar awaiting official appointment, ready “to come with measured gambollings, to serve the Son of Heaven” (*Odes*, loc.cit., and *Shu Ching*, II.IV.II.8, *L.*, p. 88).

EXPLICIT

Farewell

Or ti riman, Lettor, sovra 'l tuo banco,
Dietro pensando a ciò che si preliba,
S'esser voi lieto assai prima, che stanco.
Messo t'ò innanzi; omai per te ti ciba ...
Dante Allighieri ¹

(22) O reader, remain on your bench. (24) If you wish to experience contentment rather than fatigue: (23) consider that of which I gave you a foretaste. (25) I have put the dishes before you: now you may eat by yourself ...

Quoting Aristotle, the *Ottimo commento* explains: “By nature, man yearns for knowledge;² and when he achieves that goal, he feels contented, and does not feel fatigued. Instruction eases the effort.”

1) *La Divina Comedia*, Paradiso X. : 22-25

2) *Metaphysics*, incipit.

