

WANG Xiaoping

## On *Qianzi wen* in the Sinological literary history of Asia

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**Abstract** *Qianzi wen* exerted great influence in Japan. Nowadays, experts find it necessary to further study the numerous and diverse sequels of *Qianzi wen*, because no systematic research had actually been made on them. This article, focusing on the spread of *Qianzi wen* in Korean Peninsula and Japan, is intended to discuss its influence on East Asian literature, especially on Sinological literature.

**Keywords** *Qianzi wen*, Sinology, Korean literature, Japanese literature

**摘要** 《千字文》在日本影响深远。如今，这方面的材料还有必要去开发，因为尚未有人在此方面有整体的、系统的研究。本文仅就《千字文》在朝鲜半岛与日本的流传谈起，探讨其对东亚文学，特别是对汉文学的影响。

**关键词** 《千字文》，汉文学，朝鲜文学，日本文学

Zheng A'cai 郑阿财, an expert at the primer readers of Dunhuang 敦煌, once illustrated the deep influence of *Qianzi wen* 千字文 (*One Thousand Chinese Character Book for Children*) as well as *Meng qiu* 蒙求 (*The Explanation to Youths*), in Japan when talking about deepening the Dunhuang literary research. He pointed out that it was necessary to further study the numerous and diverse sequels of *Qianzi wen*, because no systematic research had actually been made on them. He added that if we could take the method of “seeking foreign countries’ culture when local etiquette is missing”, i.e., focus on Dunhuang

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Translated from *Zhongguo bijiao wenxue* 中国比较文学 (*Comparative Literature in China*), 2006, (2): 137–150 by DU Yixiang, College of Foreign Languages and Communications, Shaanxi University of Science and Technology

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WANG Xiaoping (✉)

College of Chinese Language and Literature, Tianjin Normal University, Tianjin 300073, China

E-mail: wxp\_tj@126.com

documents and meanwhile compare them with the related ones in foreign countries, the study would turn out to be an extensive one.<sup>1</sup>

Such an “extensive study” requires us to not only find if the documents spread to the foreign countries from the unnoticed historical materials, but also investigate their influences and admission, hence the inevitability of the combination of philology with comparative literature. This article, focusing on the spread of *Qianzi wen* in the Korean Peninsula and Japan, is intended to discuss its influences on East Asian literature, especially Sinological literature.

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## 1 *Qianzi wen* and Chinese character education in East Asia

Most pre-modern school children began learning with such primer readers as *Baijia xing* 百家姓 (*The Book of One Hundred Family Surnames*) and *Qianzi wen*, etc. In *Pengfu ji shichao* 捧腹集诗抄 (*Selections from the Collection of Humorous Poems*) by Guo Yaochen 郭尧臣, there are fourteen *qilü* 七律 (eight-line poems with seven characters to a line and a strict pattern and rhyme scheme) entitled “Mengshi tan” 蒙诗叹 (“On Enlightenment Poems”), among which the ninth vividly describes the students’ voracious reading:

As the crows caw in the evening,  
 All the students flaunt their voices.  
 Some utter “Zhao Qian Sun Li Zhou Wu Zheng”,  
 While some yell “Tian di xuan huang yu zhou hong”.  
 After finishing *Qianzi wen*, they turn to *Jian lie* 鉴略 (*The Enlightening Summary*);  
 And after *Baijia xing*, they move to *Shentong shi* 神童诗 (*The Child Prodigy’s Poetry*).  
 Occasionally you can find an outstanding student,  
 Who is reading rapidly *Daxue* 大学 (*The Great Learning*) and *Zhongyong* 中庸 (*The Doctrine of the Mean*).

The doggerel vividly unfolds a picture in which school children in private schools were wagging their heads and reading aloud *Baijia xing*, *Qianzi wen* and *Shentong shi*, etc. together at the top of their voices. *Qianzi wen*, one of the earliest books for many people, was more than a primer on literacy education; it was also a teaching text for moral education and, to some extent, literature.

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<sup>1</sup> Special Storage Department of Dunhuang-Turfan Studies Reference and Research Center, China National Library (2003), *Dunhuang yu silu wenhua xueshu jiangzuo* 敦煌与丝路文化学术讲座 (*Academic Lectures on Dunhuang and Silk Road Culture*), Vol. I, 2003, p. 149, Beijing: National Library of China.

Therefore, it embodies many aspects of education in the Chinese feudal times.

*Qianzi wen* was introduced into foreign countries at a very early time. For example, it early served as teaching material for Chinese character education in Korean Peninsula, which can be proved by a seemingly unrelated fact. Witchcraft in Korean Peninsula, a branch of Shamanism, had been greatly influential until modern times, and folk witch songs have been investigated and reorganized by some scholars now. Some of the songs in *Chosen fuzoku no kenkyu* 朝鲜巫俗研究 (*A Study on Witchcraft in Korean Peninsula*)<sup>2</sup> co-compiled by Akamatsu Akamazu 赤松智城 and Akiba 秋叶隆 reflect the marvelous combination of ancient culture with modern culture. The singers not only transmitted teachings with the rich knowledge handed down from the ancient times, but also illustrated the old adages with fashionable items such as automobiles and telephones.

From the primitive witch songs handed down orally, we found the structure and origin of the intellectuals' cultural education in the ancient Korean Peninsula.

“Hwanin” 帝释 (“Heavenly King”), the third part of *Wushan shierji ci* 乌山十二祭次 (*The Order of Twelve Sacrifices in Mount Wu*) says:

First, learn *Qianzi wen*, *Youxue qionglin* 幼学琼林 (*The Encyclopedia for Preschool Children*), *Tongmeng* 童蒙 (*Kids' Learning*), one volume of *Tongjian* 通鉴 (*Chronicles*), *Xiaoxue* 小学 (*Primary Learning*), and *Daxue*, then got proficient in *Shizhuan* 诗传 (*An Annotation to Book of Poetry*) and *Shuzhuan* 书传 (*An Annotation to Book of History*). The noble class should learn enough to be senior officials; and the middle class should learn enough to be common officials.

This is the first time that *Qianzi wen* has been mentioned, revealing the primer readers were integral teaching books for the nobility as well as common people. In *Jingcheng zhitou shu* 京城指头书 (*The Book of Fingers in Capital City*), a collection of primitive witch songs, the song entitled “Zhitou shu” 指头书 (“Book of Fingers”) quotes some lines from *Qianzi wen*:

What does the saying “玉出昆冈，金生丽水” mean?

Does it mean that “the more mountains, the more jewels” and “the more waters, the more gold”?

“玉出昆冈，金生丽水” was a variant of “金生丽水，玉出昆冈 (The gold sand streams in gold abound, and from Kunlun Mountains jade is found)” in *Qianzi wen*, which indicates *Qianzi wen*'s important influence on the cultural education

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<sup>2</sup> Akamatsu Akamazu & Akiba, 1932.

in the Korean Peninsula.

*Qianzi wen* played a very important role in Japan as well as in the Korean Peninsula. Since the Hei An Period (CE 794—1192), there has been a formulation of “four classics and three annotations”, though what they refer to remains controversial today. Roughly speaking, “four classics” refer to *Qianzi wen*, *Xin yuefu* 新乐府 (*New Yuefu Poetry*) by Bai Juyi 白居易, *Baiyong* 百咏 (*A Hundred Poems*) by Li Qiao 李峤, and *Meng qiu*. Some even argue that *Wakan Roeishu* 和汉朗咏集 (*An Anthology of Japanese and Chinese Poetry*) by Fujiwarano-Kintou, a Japanese writer, is on the list. The “Three annotations” include *Qianzi wen zhu* 千字文注 (*An Annotation to Qianzi wen*), 蒙求注 (*An Annotation to Meng qiu*) and *Hu Zeng shi zhu* 胡曾诗注 (*An Annotation to Hu Zeng’s Poetry*). Clearly, the importance of *Qianzi wen* and *Qianzi wen zhu* is beyond doubt. *Woguo Qianzi wen jiaoyu shi yanjiu* 我国千字文教育史研究 (*A Study on the Educational History of Qianzi wen in Our Country*)<sup>3</sup> by Ogata Hiroyasu 尾形裕康, a Japanese scholar, specially explores the influence of *Qianzi wen* in Japanese literacy education.

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## 2 The poetic features of *Qianzi wen*

Undoubtedly, it is almost impossible for all premier readers to have survived. Therefore, there must be reasons for *Qianzi wen*’s longstanding popularity. The fundamental reason lies in its poetic features. It is said that Zhou Xingsi 周兴嗣, a supervising secretary in the Southern Dynasty (CE 420–589), compiled *Qianzi wen* in accordance with the order of Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty (CE 464–549). It consisted of one thousand different Chinese characters. Every four characters formed a line and two lines had a rhyme, making it easier for memory. Afterwards, the book became a children’s primer. *Qianzi wen*, especially the one written by Wang Xizhi 王羲之, served as the model for calligraphy for a long time. Wei Xuan’s 韦绚 (CE 801–866) *Liu Binke jiahua lu* 刘宾客嘉话录 (*Guest Liu’s Words*) recounts such a story: To teach his princes calligraphy, Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty instructed Yin Tieshi 殷铁石 to select one thousand different characters from Wang Xizhi’s writings. To make the miscellaneous characters in good order, he summoned Zhou Xingsi and said, “You are a man of great wit and wisdom. Please rhyme them for me.”<sup>4</sup> To “rhyme them” means making them into a rhymed composition, i.e., making them “poetic”. Zhou Xingsi accomplished his mission overnight, but his hair turned all white due to the exhausting work. Zhou was greatly rewarded. Although it is somewhat

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<sup>3</sup> Ogata Hiroyasu, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> Wei Xuan, 2000, Vol. I.

exaggerating, the story undoubtedly reveals how grueling such a job was.

In China as well as in Japan, a second popular book of calligraphy was *Qianzi wen* written by Zhiyong 智永, a Zen Master. *Liu Binke jiahualu* states that Zhi Yong, an offspring of Wang Xizhi, gave away his 800 copies of Wang Xizhi's *Qianzi wen*, and every temple in the South Yangtze River region kept one. Zhiyong, living in Yongxin Temple 永欣寺, was so industrious in learning calligraphy for years that he accumulated ten jars of worn-out writing brushes, and each jar was filled with tens of thousands of them. His house was often crowded with numerous visitors coming for his writings, and the threshold was so worn out that he had to wrap it with iron sheet, which was called "The Iron Threshold". Afterwards, he buried his worn-out brushes in a "Tomb of Brushes" and made the inscription himself. This is probably the origin of the "Tombs of Brushes" in the Tenmangu Shrine (Tianman gong 天满宫) in Osaka, Japan.

Apart from rhyme, *Qianzi wen* also displays the writer's profound perceptions of the world. It involves not only the origin of the universe, the passing of history, the changing of seasons, the evolution of humans, but also the initiation of civilization, the ways of nature and society, etc. What's more, by placing them in the eternal motion of everything, it often impresses readers with a massive sense of momentum and history in a few words. The perspectives of the universe, of nature and life all clearly indicate the author's poetic temperament. The work is a wonderful fusion of history, philosophy and self-discipline. In addition, it is even a vivid picture of exuberant and dynamic natural sights:

渠荷的历，                    园莽抽条。

In the summer, lotus flowers in the canal dance out of washed brilliance; in springtime, plants in the garden sprout new twigs.

枇杷晚翠，                    梧桐早凋。

The loquats remain green late in the winter; the phoenix trees shed their leaves in the early autumn.

陈根委翳，                    落叶飘摇。

Old trees of sinuous roots still provide dense shade, though some of their leaves are falling in the withering wind.

Quotation is another poetic feature of *Qianzi wen*. Sometimes it quotes without the slightest changes, provoking imagination of link reaction; sometimes it quotes with slight alterations but maintain the highlights, making the original text identifiable. Quotes from *Shijing* 诗经 (*Book of Poetry*) are especially common, because *Shijing* contains many four-letter lines, which are in complete harmony with *Qianzi wen*. For example:

临深履薄，                    夙兴温清。

Always remain cautious just like approaching the deep water or treading on thin ice; and you should rise early in the morning and make sure your parents feel warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

似兰斯馨， 如松之盛。

You should foster virtues like those of the fragrant orchid, or like those of the luxuriant evergreen pine-tree.

俶载南亩， 我艺黍稷。

Now, beginning my cause in the southern fields, I am an expert in farming millet and sorghum.

貽厥嘉猷， 勉其祗植。

Bequeath your children excellent advice and plans of action, and encourage them to develop respectful establishments.

存以甘棠， 去而益咏。

People preserved the sweet pear tree to commemorate the duke, who was gone but eulogized ever since.

孔怀兄弟， 同气连枝。

Have great concern about your brothers, with whom you share the same origin of life and are connected like branches of one tree.

肆筵设席， 鼓瑟吹笙。

In the palace, a grand banquet was arranged; and the gala was opened with the music of zithers and flutes.

Of course, the most difficult thing is not the inlay of the wonderful lines, but the avoidance of repeating a character in the one thousand character text. It is very likely that the author selected some famous lines first and then rearranged them carefully to avoid repetition of characters. Chu Renhuo 褚人获 in the Qing Dynasty (CE 1616–1911) once stated that compiling a book was just like “performing an elegant dance on a short piece of wood and drawing a long thread from entangled silks”, indicating the great difficulty. In addition, Zhou Xingsi had to take moral education into consideration during the process. Many maxims have gained their great popularity and acceptance in children’s education. Here are some of them: “知过必改，得能莫忘。罔谈彼短，靡恃己长。信使可复，器欲难量 (He who knows his own faults must rectify them; he who has acquired certain skills should constantly practice them. Refrain from talking about another’s shortcomings, and also from bragging about your own merits. Words must stand the test of time; the capability for virtue should be enhanced beyond measure.)” and “尺璧非宝，寸阴是竞 (A block of jade is not treasure whereas a blink of time is worth fighting for).”<sup>5</sup> It’s no wonder that Wang Shizhen 王世贞 in the Ming Dynasty (CE 1368–1644) called it a masterpiece.

<sup>5</sup> Zhou Xingsi, 2002.

*Qianzi wen* refers to many Chinese cultural roots, including the oldest myths, the Spring and Autumn Periods, etc. It presents a certain number of didactic maxims, such as “女慕贞洁，男效才良 (Women cherish pure chastity; men emulate those of wisdom and ability)” and “资父事君，曰严与敬。孝当竭力，忠则尽命 (Attend upon your parents and serve the emperor with awe and reverence. Out of filial piety to your parents, you should exert your utmost effort; in loyalty to the throne, even sacrifice your life)”. However, generally speaking, such maxims do not account for a large proportion in the whole text. The fact that *Qianzi wen* was so popular in China and the neighboring countries is really meaningful and interesting.

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### 3 *Qianzi wen* and Japanese historical books

*Qianzi wen* was introduced into Japan at so early a time that it was mentioned in records even before it came to China. One of its earliest annotations, *Qianzi wen Li Xian zhu* 千字文李暹注 (*Li Xian's Annotation to Qianzi wen*), has been lost for a long time in China, with a few remnants in Dunhuang. However, the complete version is still preserved in Japan. In addition, some bamboo wood slips inscribed with lines from it are preserved in the Shosoin Repository (Zhengcangyuan 正仓院). Clearly, the Japanese nobles in the Nara Period (CE 710–794) had already used it to learn characters and literature.

Japanese scholar Touno Haruyuki 东野治之 once analyzed the education of singers of *Man-Yo-Shu* (*Anthology of Leaves*) on the basis of *Qianzi wen* and *Lunyu* 论语 (*Analects*). He pointed out that in the Nara Period, *Qianzi wen* was very popular among the nobles. Among the characters “玄黄之神祇二衣吾乞” in a song (p. 3288) in Vol. 13 of *Man-Yo-shu*, “玄黄” refers to “the heaven and earth”, as it does in *Qianzi wen*. Besides, the line “年矢不停 (years fly like an ever-flying arrow)” (p. 863) in Vol. 5 is a memorial to Youshida Yi 吉田宜 is also adapted from “年矢每催 (years fly with an arrow's speed)” in *Qianzi wen*. Keichu 契冲, a scholar in the Edo Period (CE 1603–1868), had already pointed out the two facts in *Wanye daijiangji* 万叶代匠记 (*An Explanation to Man-Yo-shu*).<sup>6</sup>

According to the oldest documents in Japan, such as *Kojiki* (*Records of Ancient Times*), *Nihon Shoki* (*Japanese Historical Records*), *Kogoshūi* (*Gleanings from Ancient Stories*) etc., *Qianzi wen* was presented to the Japanese Imperial Court along with *Lunyu* by Wani Kishi 王仁, a court academician from Baekje 百济 (18 BCE – CE 660), and Prince Nintoku 菟道稚郎 once learned it from Wang Ren. These records are still controversial today. *Kojiki* states with

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<sup>6</sup> Higashino Haruyuki, 2002.

certainty that He Er 和迩 (i.e., Wani Kishi) of Baekje came to the Japanese court and dedicated twelve volumes of *Lunyu* and one volume of *Qianzi wen*. However, Vol. 10 of *Nihon Shoki* says that this happened in the 16<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Emperor Ojin (CE 285, i.e., the 6<sup>th</sup> year of Taikang during Emperor Wu of Western Jin's reign), which is more than 260 years before the death of Zhou Xingsi. Obviously, this was a mistake.

Since the Edo Period, some scholars have tried to justify these statements. Ogata Hiroyasu put forward the theory of “the ancient version of *Qianzi wen*”, stating there had been an original manuscript of *Qianzi wen* before Emperor Wu of the Liang. Ogata Hiroyasu called it “the ancient version of *Qianzi wen*”, and he stated Wang Ren's *Qianzi wen* was such a version.

Another theory, “mistaken records”, states that the authors of *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* made mistakes. It says that the book introduced into Japan then was actually *Jijiu pian* 急就篇 or *Cangjie pian* 仓颉篇 (*The Hastily-Written Chapter*), and *Qianzi wen* came into Japan at a much later time. Kanda Kiichirō 神田喜一郎 once pointed out that the Japanese annals were intentionally moved up to the early Mikato eras, resulting in the timing error. Ogawa Tamaki 小川环树, who is proficient in *Qianzi wen*, holds such a theory.<sup>7</sup>

Whether the records are true is another matter. At any rate, they do clearly reflect the significance of *Qianzi wen* for the earliest Chinese character learners, mostly Japanese Imperial kinsmen or noblemen. Some say that to learn a foreign language means to do honor to its culture. If it is also true of literature, in a manner of speaking, some primers such as *Qianzi wen* are also included in the books that Japanese used to salute Chinese culture.

Both of the theories have some historical facts. Chinese primers, including *Jijiu pian*, were very likely introduced into Japan by so-called “naturalized persons” from the mainland of China, or the Baekje people in Japan.

The earliest existing documents seem to prove there is something true in the legends above. The fragmentary wood slips kept in the Shosoin Repository were inscribed with lines from *Qianzi wen*, revealing that the people in the Nara Period had already learned Chinese characters from the book. These slips, inscribed with lines such as “散虑逍遥 (delve into the philosophy of life and dismiss anxiety)”, were made roughly in the early eighth century. Besides the fragmentary slips, there are still some miscellaneous writings, and seven of them have something to do with *Qianzi wen*. Although they are fragmentary, their contexts are still legible. The most legible are the lines in Vol. 48 of *Da riben guwenshu xuji bieji* 大日本古文书 续集别集 (*Sequel of Nihon Komonjo*):

千字文 敕员外散骑侍郎周兴嗣次韵

<sup>7</sup> Ogawa Tamaki & Honda Akiyoshi, 1984.



天地玄黄宇宙洪荒日月盈昃辰宿列张

The line “天地玄黄宇宙洪荒日月盈昃辰宿列张” is right from the beginning of *Qianzi wen* “天地玄黄，宇宙洪荒。日月盈昃，辰宿列张。(The sky is black and the earth yellow; the universe was formed out of a chaotic state in primordial times. The sun rises and sets; the moon waxes and wanes; across the sky, constellations of stars spread)”. “玄黄” refers to the color of the heaven and earth: “玄 (black)” is the color of the heaven, and “黄 (yellow)” is the color of the earth. “洪荒”， meaning the chaotic condition, refers to the remote antiquity. “昃” means “afternoon”, and “但” in the fragmentary slip is a mistake of “昃”. The lines on the slip are right quoted from the beginning of *Qianzi wen*.<sup>8</sup>

As Kojima Noriyuki 小島宪之 has pointed out, in the later slips kept in the Heijo Palace (平城宫), we also found lines from *Qianzi wen*:

晚翠梧桐早 陈根委翳落叶飘摇

This is actually a copy of the stanza “枇杷晚翠，梧桐早凋。陈根委翳，落叶飘摇。”， but the two characters “枇” and “凋” have been worn away.<sup>9</sup>

It is inferred that these wood slips were all written by lower officials. This shows that *Qianzi wen* played a very important role in promoting literacy from the late 7<sup>th</sup> century to the early 8<sup>th</sup> century.

For the intellectuals in the Nara Period, *Qianzi wen* was not only a primer for Chinese characters, but also a textbook of Chinese culture. In *Goji (Ancient Books)*, an annotated book to *Taihoryo (Statute of Taihox)* came out in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Taiping 太平 (CE 738), there is such a note on taxes and corvees in “Lingji jie” 令集解 (“An Explanations to Items”):

金银，金黄也，谓金生丽水也。珠玉，自生曰珠，作成曰玉。所谓“玉出昆冈”。(Gold and silver: Gold is yellow. It is said that gold abounds in the gold sand streams. Pearl and jade: Pearl is a naturally occurring product, while jade is carved by man. It is said jade was found in the Kunlun Mountains.)

It goes without saying that this note is right from “金生丽水，玉出昆冈” in *Qianzi wen*.

It was likely that *Qianzi wen* had already been accepted as an important textbook for the nobles to learn Chinese characters in the Heian Period (CE 794–1185). *Sezoku Gembun (Secular Proverbs)* (with the author’s 1007 preface) compiled by Minamoto-no Tamenori 源为宪 discusses the origins of popular

<sup>8</sup> Touno Haruyuki, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Kojima Noriyuki, 1986, p. 819.

proverbs of the time, and it mentions that “even the sparrows in and near Funya 文屋 uttered ‘秋收冬藏 (the crops reaped in the autumn are to be stored in the winter)’ from *Qianzi wen*.” “文屋” was the national educational institution then. The school children read *Qianzi wen* aloud every day, and even the sparrows learned to recite it. Therefore, we can conclude that *Qianzi wen* played a very significant role in Chinese character education.

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#### 4 *Zhu Qianzi wen* and documents in the Nara Period

Almost at the same time of *Qianzi wen* was being introduced into Japan, *Zhu Qianzi wen* 注千字文 (*Annotation to Qianzi wen*) also appeared on the desks of intellectuals in the Nara Period. Some scholars, such as Touno Haruyuki have found some evidence in the following documents<sup>10</sup>:

Volume 3 of *Fayuan yijing* 法苑义镜 (A Just Mirror of the Dharma Garden), which is an annotation to *Dacheng fayuan yilinzhang* 大乘法苑义林章 (Essays on the Forest of Meanings in the Mahāyāna Dharma Garden) by Shan Zhu 善珠 (Shan-Chu) and anthologized into *Taishoo Shinshuu Daizookyoo* (New Revised Orthodox Tripitaka) and *Nihon dai zōkyō* (Japanese Buddhist Canon), records such a story:

As for He’s Jade, *Shiji* 史记 (*Historic Records*) tells such a story: Bian He 卞和, who was from Jingli in the Chu State, found a piece of unadorned jade in the Kunlun Valley, near Jingshan Mountain. He dedicated it to the King Li of the Chu State. However, the king said, “This is just a piece of stone. Bian He is trying to cheat me.” And he ordered to cut Bian’s right leg off. After the King Li died and his son King Wu came to the throne, Bian He dedicated the jade again. King Wu also said, “This is a piece of stone.” And he ordered Bian’s left leg cut off. Bian He could not bear his arrogance (不胜其狂) and he wailed at the foot of Jingshan. After his flood of tears was over, Jingshan collapsed due to his great sorrow (荆山崩颓). Afterwards, King Wu died and his son King Cheng succeeded to the throne, Bian He again dedicated the jade. The new king had the jade repaired, and it turned out to be a luminous jade. For this story, Xie Huilian 谢惠连 wrote a poem: “蒨兰莫当门，怀玉莫向楚。楚无别玉人，门非蒨兰所。(Do not plant orchids in front of the door, and do not show your jade in the Chu state. There are no people who can distinguish the real jade, and the door is not the right place for orchids). The story of Bian He has many different versions. *Qinlou shi* 琴楼诗 (*Poems of Qinlou*), *Hanji* 韩记 (*Notes of Han*), *Shiji* and *Zhu Qianzi wen*, etc., all embody the story.

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<sup>10</sup> Touno Haruyuki, 1985, pp. 219–234.

The story about Bian He and the poem of Xie Huilian mentioned here are almost identical to the records in the Ueno 上野 version of *Zhu Qianzi wen*. There are only some minor differences. For example, instead of “不胜其狂 (Bian He could not bear the arrogance)” in this passage, it is “不胜其枉 (Bian He could not bear the injustice)” in *Zhu Qianzi wen*. Apparently, “不胜其枉” in *Zhu Qianzi wen* makes more sense. Besides, different from “成王使工人取之 (The new king had the jade taken)” in the Ueno version, it is “成王使工人改之 (The new king had the jade repaired). It seems that neither of them makes much sense, so it is probably “成王使工人攻之 (The new king had the jade cut and polished).” In addition, instead of “荆山崩颓 (Jingshan collapsed)”, it is “荆山为崩颓 (Jingshan collapsed due to his great sorrow).” Despite the differences, it is safe to conclude that *Fayuan yijing* quotes from the Ueno version of *Zhu Qianzi wen*, and this passage is right from the note to “玉出昆冈” from it, with slight abridgement. However, Ueno made a mistake in quoting Xie Huilian’s poem. *Nanshi* “Yuan Shu zhuan” 南史·袁淑传 (*History of the Southern Dynasty* [with reference to] “A Biography of Yuan Shu”) embodies a poem of Yuan Shu: “种兰忌当门，怀璧莫向楚。楚无别玉人，门非植兰所。(Do not plant orchids in front of the door, and do not show your jade in the Chu state. No people in Chu can distinguish the jade, and the door is not the right place for orchid).” Ueno mistook it for Xie Huilian’s poem. This is probably because Xie Huilian once wrote a poem about Bian He: “南荆璧，万金贵，卞和不凿与石离。” (The jade of Jingshan is invaluable, but Bian He didn’t cut it out of stone).<sup>11</sup> The Ueno version confused the two, and *Fayuan yijing* followed suit.

*Zhu Qianzi wen* was also quoted by some dictionaries, encyclopedias, and annotations, etc. in the Heian Period, so we can see some of the original texts in popular books from that time. *Ju benbang cancun dianji jiyi ziliao jicheng* 据本邦残存典籍辑佚资料集成 (*A Great Collection of Materials Compiled Based on Existing Fragmentary Documents in Our Country*) compiled by Shimmi 新美寛 and complemented by Suzuki Ryūichi 铃木隆一 embodied four lost articles of *Zhu Qianzi wen*, and later Touno Haruyuki supplemented ten in his papers. Despite the different sources, they have overlapping contents. Take the case of four of them, which are rearranged according to their original texts. To better distinguish them, the ones excerpted by Touno Haruyuki are marked with the mark “\*”:

(1) “*Zhu Qianzi wen Xu*” 注千字文序 (“Preface to *Zhu Qianzi wen*”)

The calligraphies in *Qianzi shu* 千字书 (*One Thousand Character Book*) written by Zhong Yao 钟繇 are like the swans gracefully flying in the clouds

<sup>11</sup> “Juge xing” 鞠歌行 (“Ballads for the Ball Game”), in Vol. 33 of *Yuefu shiji* 乐府诗集 (*Yuefu Poetry*), Xianghe Ballads, 8.

or dancing beautifully in the sea. Wang Xizhi's calligraphies, which are very powerful and forceful, are like flying dragons and crouching tigers. The later generations cherished them greatly and carefully deposited them in secret places.

—*Sanjiao zhigui jueming zhu* 三教指归觉明注 (*Jueming's Annotation to Guide to Three Religions*), Vol. 1, quoted from “*Qianzi wen Xu*”.

The preface to *Zhu Qianzi wen* by Sima Xian 司马暹, a senior official of the Liang Dynasty (CE 502–557), says, “The calligraphies in Zhong You's *Qianzi shu* are like the swans gracefully flying in the clouds or dancing in the sea. Wang Xizhi's characters, which are very powerful and forceful, are like flying dragons and crouching tigers. The later generations cherished them greatly and deposited them in secret places.

—*Sanjiao zhigui danguang zhu* 三教指归敦光注 (*Danguang's Annotated Guide to Three Religions*), same as the quote in Vol. I (B) of *Sanjiao zhigui jueming zhu*. \*

(2) “Ruiyu chengsui” 闰余成岁 (“An Intercalary Month is Sometimes Necessary to Round out a Lunar Year”)

*Zhu Qianzi wen* says, “An intercalary month is sometimes necessary to round out a lunar year.” The note: The cosmic orbit has 365 and 1/4 degrees. Each day the earth goes forward 1 degree revolving around the sun. Thus after every 12 months, there are still 5 and 1/4 degrees left. As 1 degree takes 1 day's time, 5 degrees take 5 days' time, and the 1/4 degree takes 1/4 day of the sixth day. There are 12 months in a year. Among them 6 months are shorter months, each including 30 days; while the rest 6 months are longer months, 31 days. Consequently, the 1/4 day of the 6 extra days makes more than a day, and thus there are 6 days rather than 5 days. Since there are 11 and 1/4 extra days in a year, every three years they make an extra month, hence a leap year.

—*Hehan langyongji sizhu* 和汉朗咏集私注 (*Personal Notes to Wakan Roeishu*), Vol. I (B), Spring Section, “Intercalary Lunar March”.\*

(3) “Lü lü tiao yang” 律吕调阳 (“The Pitch Pipes, Odd and even Ones Together, Harmonize Yin and Yang”)

*Qianzi wen Zhu* says, “Ling Lun 伶伦, a minister of Emperor Huang (Huangdi 黄帝). He once took a piece of bamboo in the west of Daxia 大夏 and north of Kunlun and made it into a pitch pipe. By carving 12 holes in the pipe, he was able to make the tones of each scale, and, subsequently, used it to tune up and survey calendars.

—*Hehan langyongji sizhu*, Vol. 4, Miscellaneous Section, “Bamboo”.

*Qianzi wen Zhu* says, “Ling Lun once cut a pie of bamboo and made it into a pitch pipe, so the musicians are often called “Ling” men.

—*Hehan langyongji sizhu*, Vol. 4, Miscellaneous Section, “Orchestral musical instruments”.

(4) “Jin sheng lishui” 金生丽水 (“The Gold Begot Beautiful Water”)

*Qianzi wen Zhu* says, “Gold abounds in Yongchang 永昌, Yizhou, and it is even visible somewhere on the earth.

—*Leiju mingyichao* from the Library of the Japanese Imperial Household Ministry, p.4.\*

(5) “Yanmen zi sai” 雁门紫塞 (“The Wall of Wild Geese Gate Pass is Purple”)

Li Luo 李迥 said, “Yanmen 雁门 (Wild Geese Gate) is the name of a mountain, and the prefecture is named after it. The mountain is so high that even the birds cannot fly over it. There is a gap in the mountain, which is like a gate. Wild geese, a kind of swan, all migrate via it, hence the name Wild Geese Gate.

—*Sanjiao zhigui jueming zhu*, Vol. II (B), quoted from Li Luo’s words. It is a little different from the quote from *Qianzi wen Zhu* in *Hehan langyongzhu lüechao* 和汉朗咏注略抄 (*Selected Collection of Wakan Roeishu*)

Yanmen is located in Yizhou 益州. It is mentioned in *Qianzi wen Zhu*.

—*Hehan langyongji sizhu*, Vol. V, “Leaving-taking”.\*

(6) “Nian shi mei cui” 年矢每催 (“Years Fly with Arrow’s Speed”)

“*Shi* 矢” means “arrow”. Time flies just like shooting arrows. Living beings all are indulged in present secular pleasures, ignoring the bitterness of the future. The lust for treasure blinds their eyes to the passing of time, and they think they can make life longer with the treasures they desire. Alas! They do not want to attain virtue.

—*Sanjiao zhigui jueming zhu*, Vol. II (A), quoted from the note to Jihuan 季还.

*Qianzi wen* reads: “The year is urging every hour with arrow’s speed.” Jihuan (Li Luo) commentated: “‘*Shi*’ means ‘arrow’. Time flies just like shooting arrows.”

(7) “Hu feng ba xian” 户封八县 (Their Families had been Granted Eight Counties)

When Emperor Gao of the Han Dynasty (256–195 BCE) contended against Xiang Yu 项羽 for the rule of China, he lost all 72 campaigns in nine years. It was not until the general Han Xin 韩信 won military ingenuity that he was able to gain the throne. Then the war was over and the world was at peace again.

—*Hehan langyouji sizhu*, quoted from

*Qianzi wen Zhu*.

(8) “Kunchi jieshi” 昆池碣石 (From Kunming Pool to Mount Jaggirock)

*Zhu Qianzi wen* reads: “Kunming Pool is located in the west of Great Wall.”

Due to its poetic features, *Qianzi wen* allows readers learn literature while learning characters, for they can memorize the lines and characters simultaneously. Thus, the intellectuals in the Nara Period were able to easily memorize the lines by reading and copying, and they even often quoted them as idioms in writing. The author has found some examples in *Man-Yo-shu*, the oldest collection of Japanese poems. For example, in “Memorial of Youshida” 吉田宜书状, which is on p. 863 of the fifth volume, there is a line “耽读讽咏, 感谢欢怡。”, which gives rise to many different interpretations. The author thinks that “怡” here actually is a mistake for “招”, and the line is a variant of “欣奏累遣, 感谢欢招.”<sup>12</sup> (Let joys converge, and worries banish; the troubles are held at bay, and gladness beckons),” which is from *Qianzi wen*. In the same volume, a second article “Chenke zi'aiwen” 沉疴自哀文 (“Self Lamentation on My Severe and Lingering Disease”) by Yamanoueno Okura 山上忆良 contains a line “老病相催 (Lingering Diseases come with an arrow’s speed)”, which is also a variant of “年矢相催” in *Qianzi wen zhu*.

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## 5 Conclusion

The paper focuses on *Qianzi wen*’s distribution in Japan and its influences on the Nara literature, offering some supplements and corrections to Touno Haruyuki and other scholars’ research. As for its influence on the long history of Japanese education, Ogata Hiroyasu, who is mentioned above, has already studied it meticulously. Ogata dubbed the various versions of *Qianzi wen* — he thought they were all adapted from Zhou Xingsi’s version— “unorthodox *Qianzi wen*”. As a group of works with rich content and various styles, they abound in China,

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<sup>12</sup> Wang Xiaoping, 2004, pp. 119–123.

Japan and the Korean Peninsula. Ogata has listed many but not all of them, so complementary studies are still needed.

According to the common literary concept, *Qianzi wen* does not count as a poem or an essay, or a play. As a matter of fact, whether it can be categorized into literature or is worthy of literary study is still controversial. However, if we give careful thought to Chinese comparative literary criticism on the basis of the characteristics of China's literary development, it would be a different case.

Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (CE 1715–1744), a Japanese scholar in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, once discussed “national characteristics” in his *Shutsujo gogo* 出定后语 (*Words after Meditation*). He made special mention of the appetite of Indians (mystery), Chinese (rhetoric) and Japanese (isolation). Whether it is true is another matter, but there is no lack of evidence of the Chinese emphasis on rhetoric. Due to their strong preference, Chinese people employ rhetoric wherever speech and writing go. The style names, aliases and posthumous titles are the rhetoric of names; the picking of auspicious characters and avoidance of unpleasant ones are the rhetoric of place names; the shop signs, antithetical couplets, and study names are the rhetoric of residence. The fortune-seeking practices such as the upside-down Chinese character “*fu* 福 (blessing)” are the rhetoric of custom. What's more, in modern times, the elaboration of borrowed words from other cultures, and even the strong aesthetic features in political slogans and speeches are also the unique and salient features of Chinese culture. The emphasis on rhetoric has also exerted great influences on sinology in foreign countries.

As for *Qianzi wen*, a primer for literacy and calligraphy for children and women, much importance should also be attached to both rhetoric and moral education. It was derived from a rhetoric-and-morality-oriented culture, and in turn became a link to its tradition. Its emphasis on rhetoric has been praised and welcomed by both teachers and students for a long time.

Certainly, the spread of *Qianzi wen* to the Korean Peninsula and Japan was in debt to the important role Chinese characters played there. Historically, *Qianzi wen* played similar roles in Sinological education and quality education. Today, as Chinese character education is shrinking and even dying, *Qianzi wen* written by calligraphers of the past dynasties is still playing a part in calligraphy practice.

The centuries-old cultural communication has bequeathed us considerable academic sources for the comparative literary study of ancient Eastern Asian literature. The numerous related research works, the newly unearthed or discovered material, and the old materials worthy of re-reading render it necessary to apply the traditional textual research methods to the study. For example, many of the codex of the Tang Dynasty (CE 618–907) collected in Japan were handwritten copies, hence many mistakes were included. Therefore, collation is needed first. As a result, the impression of common comparative

literary studies may be changed, but would it be possible that some new ideas could be brought about? After all, it is impossible to truly look into the depths of the texts unless the original features of them are made clear.

*Qianzi wen* has exerted unquestioned influence on the literature of the Nara Period, indicating the literature of that time was still in a developmental stage of imitation and patchworks. Just as Buddhism had been assimilated for thousands of years in China, Chinese character culture had also been assimilated for thousands of years in Japan. In this sense, to pursue the path of *Qianzi wen*'s circulation in Japan is also to explore the process of Chinese character culture transplanted to a different culture.

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## About the contributor

Wang Xiaoping is a professor in Literature College and head of the Institute of



Comparative Cultures of Comparative Literature at Tianjin Normal University. He worked as visiting associate professor at the International Culture Center of Japan, the academic institution directly under the Japanese Ministry of Culture, and was a professor in Human Culture Department and the Graduate School of Tezukayama Gakuin University 帝塚山大学 in Japan.

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### **About the translator**

Du Yixiang is an English teacher professor of the College of Foreign Languages and Communications at the Shaanxi University of Science and Technology. He was born in Yinan, Shandong Province in 1975 and graduated from the School of Foreign Languages at Lanzhou University in 2005. His published works include: *Humanity and Transcendence of Humanity*, *The Significance of Violence: A Study on the Archetype of Book of Job*, and *The Tragicomedy in Lolita*, etc.