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Rhetoric as the art of listening

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“或問：‘儀、秦學乎鬼谷術，而習乎縱橫言，安中國者各有十餘年。是夫？’曰：‘詐人也，聖人惡諸。’ Someone asked: ‘Zhang Yi and Su Qin studied Guigu’s art and learned *zongheng* doctrines; each put the Central States at peace for more than 10 years, is this true?’ Reply: ‘They were deceivers. Sages despise them.’

Yang Xiong *Fayan*
揚雄《法言》¹

《鬼谷子·權篇》：與勇者言，依於敢；與愚者言，依於銳。此其術也
《鄧析子·轉辭》：與勇者言，依於敢；與愚者言，依於說。此言之術也

Rhetoric as the Art of Listening

Concepts of Persuasion in the First Eleven Chapters of the *Guiguzi*

Abstract

The first eleven chapters of the book *Guiguzi* 鬼谷子 are ascribed to Master Guigu, the alleged teacher of the two famous rhetoricians Su Qin 蘇秦 and Zhang Yi 張儀. These chapters provide a methodological approach to the art of persuasion which is fundamentally different from European rhetoric. Whereas European rhetoric, originating in Greek rhetoric, is mainly concerned with the persuasion of big audiences in public forums and institutions such as assemblies (the agora as birthplace of democracy) and courtrooms, the persuasive strategies in the *Guiguzi* mainly focus on the involvement with an individual counterpart. In the *Guiguzi* listening to and exploring the particular type of opponent and then taking advantage of his individual preferences is most decisive for the success of persuasion. The *Guiguzi* does not teach how to formulate a perfect piece of rhetorical art which accords to all rules of a commonly shared system of persuasive logic as it is known from European rhetorical traditions. From this different approach also follows a different set of systematic problems in the art of persuasion. The typology of formal figures of speech so important in European rhetoric is not as important as the exact typology of human characters which have to be correctly identified to be correlated to the types of speech which have the greatest persuasive effect on them. Each of the eleven chapters discusses a particular method of persuasion in an analysis of different aspects of the communicative process in which persuasion takes place. Together they appear as a handbook on the dynamic process of persuasion, a persuasion that evolves in a dialogic encounter not in a monologic performance as in European rhetoric.

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¹ “Yuanqian” 淵騫 chapter, section 8, transl. Coyle, 1999: 55.

Guiguzi, the man and the book

Guiguzi is traditionally known as the founder of the *zonghengjia* 縱橫家, the school of traveling persuaders or diplomats, the most outstanding masters of rhetoric and persuasion in early China. Yet in many books and articles on Chinese rhetoric he is not even mentioned once. That he has generally received so little scholarly attention in Chinese Studies is mainly due to the uncertain dating of the text *Guiguzi* and the little information we have on the historical person Guiguzi. In the following paper I will therefore first give a short overview on what we know about the historical person Guiguzi and the text *Guiguzi*. I will then discuss the text and present an interpretation of its concept of persuasion to finally reflect on its contribution to the general discussion of Chinese rhetoric.

The *Shiji* is the earliest source to mention a historical person named Guiguzi as the teacher of Su Qin 蘇秦 (? – 284 BCE) and Zhang Yi 張儀 (? – 310 BCE) in their respective *liezhuan* biographies.² As they became famous *zonghengjia* and well-known for their art of persuasion Guiguzi became known as the founder of the political *zongheng* school and as a master of persuasion.³ Guigu Xiansheng or Guiguzi is mentioned in some Han and early post-Han sources (Chen Chong 陳崇 [fl. AD 3], Yang Xiong 揚雄 [53 BCE–18 CE], Guo Pu 郭璞 [AD 276–324]).⁴ But none of the dynastic histories provide us with a biography of Guiguzi. We have no biographical information of him other than that he lived a secluded life in the Gui valley.⁵ A tradition that Guigu Xiansheng was the teacher of the renowned Warring States generals Sun Bin 孫臏 (? – 316 BCE) and Pang Juan 龐涓 (? – 342 BCE)⁶ is considered to be a late confabulation. The association of the name Wang Xu (王翹) is also not generally held to be supported. In the popular lore of Ming (1368-1644) times Guiguzi becomes one of the tutelary spirits of divination who is venerated as the patriarch of physiognomy (*xiangshu* 相術) and associated with astrological methods of divination.⁷

The text *Guiguzi* has two parts. The first twelve chapters form a unit. The 12th chapter might be a postface that was added later from some other source as it is identical with chapter 55 of the *Guanzi* 管子. It is this first part of the text which deals with methods of persuasion and which is of interest for us. Two further chapters, “Zhuan wan” 轉丸 13 and “Qu luan” 祛亂 14, which according to Liu Xie's 劉勰 early 6th century *Wenxin diaolong* 文心彫龍 deal with skilful words (*qiao ci* 巧辭) and refined

² *SJ* 69:2241 and 70:2279.

³ Theunissen 1938.

⁴ Broschat 1985:1, fn 1.

⁵ Later commentaries try to identify places with the name Ghost Valley (several are mentioned in the dynastic histories) or the homophonous Valley of Return (歸谷).

⁶ See Wumen Xiake's 吳門嘯客 *The Battle of Wits Between Sun and Pang*, *Sun Pang douzhi yanyi* 孫龐鬪志演義, published in 1636. Cf. Durand-Dastès 2010: 7-9.

⁷ Durand-Dastès 2010: 7-9.

methods (*jing shu* 精術), have been lost. The second part consists of three chapters which have a strong Daoist and cosmological tinge. The first part of the *Guiguzi* is regarded by most Chinese scholars (Yu 1937, Zhao 1957, Xu 2012 etc.) as a pre-Qin work.⁸ Western scholars are more sceptical. Michael Loewe, for example, decided not to include the *Guiguzi* in his *Early Chinese Texts*. Broschat in his detailed discussion of the textual history of the text remains sceptical and leaves the dating issue open. The earliest source referring to the text *Guiguzi* is Pei Yin's 裴駘 (fl. 438) *Shiji jijie* 史記集解 commentary. He states that the *Guiguzi* (called *Baihece* 捭闔策 or *Benjing yinfu qishu* 本經陰符七術 in the earliest sources) has the chapters “Chuai” 揣 and “Mo” 摩.⁹ The title *Guiguzi* is first mentioned in the early 7th century book catalogue (“Jingji zhi” 經籍志) of the *Suishu* 隋書. As this catalogue was largely based on Ruan Xiaoxu's 阮孝緒 (479-536) *Qilu* 七錄¹⁰ this bibliographical record might go back to the early 6th century. From the early titles we might infer that the text was a compilation of at least two parts: *Baihe ce* 捭闔策 and *Benjing yinfu qishu* 本經陰符七術 and was probably written by several authors. From Liu Zongyuan's 柳宗元 (773-819) refutation of the book in his essay “Bian *Guiguzi*” 辯鬼谷子 we know that the book he saw bears strong resemblance to our current version.

The *Suishu* “Jingji zhi” lists a *Guiguzi* with a commentary by Huang Fumi 皇甫謐 (215–282). The Japanese bibliography *Nihonkoku genzai shomokuroku* 日本國見在書目 compiled in 891 by Fujiwara no Sukeyo 藤原佐世 (847-97) who modelled his catalogue after the *Suishu* “Jingjizhi”,¹¹ also gives Huang Fumi as commentator. Chao Gongwu 晁公武 (ca 1105- ca 1180) is the first who mentions a commentary by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (431-536) in his *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志 (Preface 1151). Tao's commentary is the earliest commentary on the *Guiguzi* extant today. These early commentaries might be taken as *ante quem* indicators for dating the text. Yet, both Huang and Tao are easily used as pseudo authors or commentators for mysterious books. Their authorship is therefore not reliable. There is another hypothesis that the *Guiguzi* is a blending of the two works *Suzi* 蘇子 and *Zhangzi* 張子 ascribed to his students Su Qin and Zhang Yi and listed in the *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi” 漢書藝文志. But no evidence supports this claim. Fragments of the lost *Suzi* do not bear any resemblance to the *Guiguzi*.¹²

Let me shortly summarise the evidence we have: There are short references in the *Shiji* to a Guigu Xiansheng who is regarded as the teacher of Su Qin and Zhang Yi. The earliest mention of a text *Guiguzi* is made in a 5th century source (Pei Yin's [372-451] *Shiji jijie*), the 7th century book catalogue from the *Suishu* lists the text with a commentary by Huangfu mi – which points to the

⁸ For a more detailed introduction into the textual history of the *Guiguzi* see Broschat 1985: 19-55.

⁹ SJ 69:2242.

¹⁰ *Suishu* 34:1005.

¹¹ Shively et al., 1999: 345.

¹² Broschat 1985:26.

existence of the text in the 3rd century but is not reliable. The text does not carry features which would clearly mark it as post Warring States text.

Text interpretation

Many scholars have claimed that the first part of the text is about persuasion and rhetoric.¹³ Yet, most of the topics discussed in the text deal with forms of interaction that are not connected to linguistic communication but rather to different forms of observations, assessments and calculations as well as epistemological reflections. Even those chapters that relate to persuasive techniques do not focus on these as central topics but mention rhetoric as one of several possible fields of application. This can be illustrated by a short overview over the chapters. The chapter titles mostly consist of analytical keyterms which are introduced and defined in the chapter and used as central analytical tools.

1. Bai He 捭闔: Prodding and Ceasing/Opening Up and Closing Down

This chapter introduces and defines a number of basic principles presented in the correlative mode. The main principles are *bai* and *he*, to open and to close. These are correlated with Yin and Yang, beginning and end, moving and staying still etc., concepts that are used throughout the book.

2. Fan Ying 反應: Reflection and Response

This chapter basically deals with an epistemological problem: how can we know something about others? How can we find out the character of someone else to know how to best deal with him? It introduces a number of techniques of going back and forth between oneself and the other to gain insight into the individual dispositions and discover strengths and weaknesses by provoking reactions, by means of active listening and techniques of “fishing”.

3. Nei Jian 內撻: Internal Bonds

This chapter talks about creating internal bonds as basic conditions for successful interaction. It is in my view the most difficult chapter of the first part as it is particular difficult to relate it to the other chapters and to understand its peculiar function within the first part.

4. Di Xi 抵巇: Dealing with Fissures/Gaps

This chapter discusses fissures/gaps as something the occurrence of which has to be carefully observed. How to discover and close these fissures/gaps is the main theme of the chapter.

5. Fei Qian 飛箝: Making Fly and Manacling

¹³ “With the exception of the *Guiguzi's* last chapter which presents a relatively superficial philosophy, the entire text is devoted to practical aspects of persuasion.” Metcalf 2001: 42.

This chapter describes a strategy of hooking people by first assessing them, then exciting and attracting them with something they like (making them fly) and then hooking them (manacling) to manipulate them in the way you want.

6. Wu He 忤合: Disagreeing and Agreeing

This chapter discusses the problem that any position you take stands against the position of somebody else. It analyses ways of deciding which side should be taken (and with what to agree and to disagree accordingly).

7. Chuai 揣: Figuring Out

This chapter explains which aspects of the counterpart should be figured out and how they should be assessed.

8. Mo 摩: Stroking or Ingratiating

This chapter talks about techniques of animating others by means of identification.

9. Quan 權: Weighing

This chapter is not about weighing (which is an important topic in other chapters) but about different kinds of talking to different people according to their social roles and individual preferences.

10. Mou 謀: Planning

This chapter talks about conditions of co-operations, how to discover weak points and how to draw consequences.

11. Jue 決: Deciding

This chapter is a short reflection on what a decision is, how a decision is made and why.

12. Fu Yan 符言: Matching Speech

This chapter consists of nine paragraphs which explain how certain actions should be conducted in the best way. These nine actions do not play any role in the preceding chapters and appear as new topics. It is virtually identical with chapter 55 “Jiu shou” 九守 of the *Guanzi* and is probably not part of the original textual unit.

Tsao Ding-ren sees a progressive sequence in the arrangement of the chapters. “From the most basic functions of speech/silence, action/non-action (*pai-ho*—opening up and closing down), knowing oneself and the past events (*fan-ying*—reflection and responses), one proceeds to figure out (*chuai*)

things beyond oneself and the past, to know other people and other relevant information. Once the information is at hand, one uses stroking (*mo*) to make sure. Then, one can weigh and evaluate (*chuan*–weighing) this information to use it in the planning (*mou*) of a strategy of persuasion. Then, four specific methods are provided for more specific purposes: *nei-chien*–the internal bonds through which persuasion works, *ti-hsi*–dealing with fissures, i.e., the less than perfect situations, *fei-chien*–making fly and manacling, which deals with attracting talent, and *wu-ho*–disagreeing and agreeing, which helps deciding whom to turn to and whom to turn against. Finally, there is a brief instruction on decision making.”¹⁴ Metcalf equally sees a development in the chapters “which are arranged in an order that sequentially describes how to establish, cultivate, and control a relationship.”¹⁵

I don’t see such a clear line in the book. Chapter two, “Fanying”, for example, is not just about oneself but deals with the interaction between oneself and an interlocutor which includes figuring out things, stroking, weighing and planning. Chapters 1-11 all appear to deal with one theme highlighting different aspects of it. The main theme running through all of the chapters is the process of winning somebody’s affections in order to manipulate him/her. Although each of the first eleven chapters focuses on certain aspects of this theme they all contain several elements of the entire process. The chapters use an identical core of analytical terms many of which are unique for this text and are not used in other texts. They allude to the main themes and chapter specific analytical terms of the other chapters and thus form a coherent discourse which indicates that the process they are describing is one and the same. Chapter specific themes are condensed in most of the chapter titles (chapter 9 “Quan” 權 is an exception). Chapter one uses and defines a number of terms which are taken up in the later chapters. It introduces most systematically the notion of Yin and Yang for the context of persuasion and it uses the terms *zhoumi* 周密 (exposing and concealing), *fanfu* 反覆 (returning), and *fanwu* 反忤 (counteracting) which play a central role in chapters eight, two and six. Chapter two builds on the correlations that were defined in chapter one: The speech of others is movement, the silence of oneself is tranquility (人言者動也.己默者靜也). Chapter three uses the central term (and title) *chuai* 揣 (figuring out) from chapter seven. Chapter four makes use of the central concept (and title) of chapter one: *bai he* 捭闔 (opening and closing). Chapter five uses the central concept (and title) *di xi* 抵巇 (dealing with fissures) of the preceding chapter four. Chapter six uses the central concept (and title) *fei qian* 飛箠 (making fly and manacling) of the preceding chapter five. Chapter eight uses the term *zhoumi* 周密 (exposing and concealing) from chapter one and the central term (and title) *chuai* 揣 (figuring out) from chapter seven. Chapter nine uses (in some editions) the concept *kai bi* 開閉 (opening and closing) from the first chapter. Chapter ten applies the term *chuai qing* 揣情 (figuring out the situation) that is also used in chapter seven and uses the term *mo* 摩 (ingratiating) which is also

¹⁴ Tsao 1985, abstract. Note that the four chapters with the “specific methods” come between the chapters Mo and Quan.

¹⁵ Metcalf 2001: 42.

the title of chapter eight. Most of the chapters explain the method of investigating and exploring (*shen* 審, *cha* 察) and of measuring and gauging things (*du* 度, *liang* 量, *quan* 權, *chuai* 揣, *jiao* 校, *liao* 料) to get to know the political, social or psychological situation (*qing* 情) and get it under control.¹⁶ Other central concepts are *yin* 因 (adapting/complying), *cong* 從 (following), *qiu* 求 (seeking), *fu* 符 (according), *ying* 應 (responding), *yin* 隱 (hiding), *shu* 數 (calculating), and *bian* 變 (changing).

The composition of these eleven chapters thus resembles a fractal structure in which each part represents a constitutive aspect of the whole and yet at the same time also reflects the whole in its entirety. The analytical keywords of the titles gain weight as leading concepts which form the main categories of the greater field. The chapters are written as essays that follow and further explore these conceptual terms. This is reminiscent of dictionary or commentary genres. The chapters appear much weaker if they are read separately and not in an inter-related way. If we put the general theme of the textual mosaic into a greater picture we recognise the main theme as a complex process of manipulating and controlling people which can be described in the following stages:¹⁷

The basic premise mentioned in several of the chapters (especially chap. 6) is that nothing is constant and everything is subject to change. To preserve order in a changing world humans therefore have to follow the changes according to their times. One way to know how to change according to times is to study the patterns of change in the past. The future can thereby be known. The present age can also be better comprehended. The first stage in the process of manipulation is to find out whose position is identical with your own position and whose is different, who is right and who is wrong, who is acceptable and who is not, who is in (*nei* 內) and who is out (*wai* 外) etc. (beginning of chap. 5). You thus first define your own position vis à vis others to become aware of the mutual relationship and to decide to whom you should turn and against whom you should position yourself (chap. 6). In order to then develop an efficient strategy of manipulating the counterpart (mostly the ruler) and persuade him to follow your course (and not that of others) you first have to measure and assess the situation and personality of your interlocutor (the ruler) in great detail. This can be done by gathering objective formal data on the one hand and on the other to figure out the individual disposition of your interlocutor by provoking his feelings, by active listening and other techniques that animate or even

¹⁶ The main variants are: chap. 1: 審察其所先後. 度權量能. 校其伎巧短長 and: 皆見其權衡輕重. 乃為之度數 and: 料其情. Chap. 2: 若探人而居其內. 量其能. Chap. 5: 度權量能 and: 必度權量能 and: 量智能. 權材力. 料氣勢. Chap. 6: 度材能知睿. 量長短遠近. Chap. 7: 必量天下之權而揣諸侯之情. 量權不審, 不知強弱輕重之稱. 揣情不審, 不知隱匿變化之動靜 and: 度于大小 謀於眾寡, 稱貨財有無之數, 料人民多少. Chap. 8: 摩者, 揣之術也. 內符者, 揣之主也. Chap. 10: 夫度材量能揣情者. Chap. 11: 度以往事. 驗之來事.

¹⁷ I am not sure whether the following sequence given in chap. 10 refers to this overall process that is laid out in the first eleven chapters: “Change gives rise to matters, matters give rise to plans, plans give rise to strategies, strategies give rise to discussions, discussions give rise to persuasions, persuasions give rise to initiatives, initiatives give rise to withdrawal, withdrawal gives rise to control” 變生事. 事生謀. 謀生計. 計生議. 議生說. 說生進. 進生退. 退生制. Xu 2012: 150.

force him to reveal himself (chap. 2, 7). Once you have ascertained all the necessary empirical data you can start to develop a strategy and plan how you will proceed to make and keep him compliant through all the constant changes. By observing the principles of opening and closing (chap. 1) you can control fissures caused by the changing circumstances, and you can ensure that these fissures which might lead to a personal alienation or a deviating position are always closed (chap. 4).¹⁸ An important technique to draw the ruler to your side is to entice him by offering him something he can identify with. This is compared to baiting a fish and hook it by making a sudden move. You can hook your interlocutor by arousing his feelings through offering him exactly the kind of things he likes (chap. 2, 8). This is when the art of persuasion finally appears on the scene. You need to actuate exactly the kind of talk which is appropriate to the individual character of the person who is to be persuaded (chap. 9). As a consequence different kinds of decisions will be made according to changing conditions (chap. 11).

The chapters in the *Guiguzi* are essayistic reflections which expand in great detail on the different stages and aspects of this process of manipulation at the end of which comes the art of persuasion which leads to a certain decision.

In the two parts of his *Either-Or (Enten-Eller 1843)* Søren Kierkegaard contrasts and explores an aesthetic and an ethical mode as two alternative ways of leading a life. The last section of the first part (“Diary of a Seducer”) describes in great detail the subtle art of manipulation. The main protagonist uses all his skills to manipulate a relationship to a female by using irony, artifice, caprice, imagination and arbitrariness to engineer poetically satisfying possibilities; he is not so much interested in the act of seduction as in willfully creating its interesting possibilities. What makes this work so interesting for our reading of the *Guiguzi* is that it illustrates a number of its principles in practice and shows clearly the subordinate role that rhetoric plays in this game. Language is used as an important tool but it remains just one among many other tools, the art of manipulation is beyond language as the *Guiguzi* also demonstrates.

Yet, persuasion is not just one of the continuous themes of the *Guiguzi*, it is the outstanding and final technique to achieve the desired decision. All other techniques are supplementary and serve as supportive aids to prepare the scene for the final act of persuasion. Therefore it makes sense to use this book as a manual of persuasion.

¹⁸ Using the term *xi* 隙 which is also used in the *Guiguzi* here, the *Hanfeizi* expounds a similar idea in chapter 27: “In such a situation the ministers are thus estranged and the ruler is isolated. If estranged ministers serve an isolated ruler, this is what is called a dangerous situation.” 如此，則人臣為隙穴，而人主獨立。以隙穴之臣而事獨立之主，此之謂危殆。 Chen Qiyou 1974: 500.

The literary form of the *Guiguzi*

For several reasons however it is difficult to represent the process envisioned by the¹⁹ *Guiguzi* in textual form. First, the process itself is so far beyond language that it is difficult to learn persuasion by reading about it. Second, the process has to be learned as a communicative oral practice, not as a practice of composing texts or performing speeches. The efficacy of persuasion is conceptualised in the dynamic process of a dialogical interaction, not in the dynamic of a monological performance.²⁰ The result is not a static piece of rhetorical art that realises the perfection of aesthetic rules like a Greek statue, but the art of flexible moving and finding a balance in a field of interpersonal power tensions. Most examples of persuasion in the *Zhanguo ce* or the *Zuo zhuan* are presented in the form of speeches that argue brilliantly according to fixed rules. Like most of the Western outstanding exempla of persuasion these speeches can be analysed by focusing on the rhetorical constructions of their linguistic forms performed by an outstanding individual. In contrast, the art of persuasion in the *Guiguzi* is not about an awesome performance of a great self. It is all about the counterpart and about keeping oneself hidden and silent so that he doesn't see what you are doing and, ideally, is convinced that his decisions were made all by himself. In the *Guiguzi* the art of listening is conditional for the art of talking. The persuader is not a great stage performer but a *Master of Disguise*.

Yet, the literary form and rhetoric of the *Guiguzi* itself is a presentation of general principles, analogies, detailed descriptions and listings of artifices. The technique of providing different perspectives on an identical theme is a method to achieve abstraction. We are nevertheless surprised that the persuasive process is presented by the *Guiguzi* in the form of a monologue without any illustrations. This seems to be a contradiction to the text's own principles. But how could it be presented differently?

The queen of Chao and the old commander

The *Zhanguo ce* provides a brilliant illustration of *Guiguzi*'s principles with a striking example of how the philosophy of the *Guiguzi* could be presented in a historical narrative of a dialogue²¹:

觸龍說趙太后

趙太后新用事，秦急攻之。趙氏求救於齊。齊曰：「必以長安君為質，兵乃出。」太后不肯，大臣強諫。太后明謂左右：「有復言令長安君為質者，老婦必唾其面。」左師觸龍言願見太后。太后盛氣而揖之。入而徐趨，至而自謝，曰：「老臣病足，曾不能疾走。不得見久矣，竊自恕，而恐太后玉體之有所郤也，故願望見太后。」

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²⁰ See for this point also Crump 1964: 101.

²¹ Translation by Robert Eno 2010. Compare the translation by Crump 1970: 332-333, no. 262: The queen of Chao and the old commander (repr. 1996: 318-319).

太后曰：「老婦恃輦而行。」曰：「日食飲得無衰乎？」曰：「恃鬻耳。」曰：「老臣今者殊不欲食，乃自強步，日三、四里，少益嗜食，和於身也。」太后曰：「老婦不能。」太后之色少解。

左師公曰：「老臣賤息舒祺，最少，不肖。而臣衰，竊愛憐之，願令得補黑衣之數，以衛王宮。沒死以聞。」太后曰：「敬諾。年幾何矣？」對曰：「十五歲矣。雖少，願及未填溝壑而託之。」太后曰：「丈夫亦愛憐其少子乎？」對曰：「甚於婦人。」太后笑曰：「婦人異甚！」對曰：「老臣竊以為媼之愛燕后，賢於長安君。」曰：「君過矣！不若長安君之甚。」

左師公曰：「父母之愛子，則為之計深遠。媼之送燕后也，持其踵，為之泣，念悲其遠也！亦哀之矣。已行，非弗思也，祭祀必祝之，祝曰：『必勿使反！』豈非計久長，有子孫相繼為王也哉？」太后曰：「然。」左師公曰：「今三世以前，至於趙之為趙，趙主之子孫侯者，其繼有在者乎？」曰：「無有。」曰：「微獨趙，諸侯有在者乎？」曰：「老婦不聞也。」「此其近者禍及身，遠者及其子孫。豈人主之子孫則必不善哉？位尊而無功，奉厚而無勞，而挾重器多也。今媼尊長安君之位，而封之以膏腴之地，多予之重器，而不及今令有功於國。一旦山陵崩，長安君何以自託於趙？老臣以媼為長安君計短也，故以為其愛不若燕后。」太后曰：「諾！恣君之所使之！」於是為長安君約車百乘，質於齊，齊兵乃出。

Chu Long Advises the Dowager Queen

When the Dowager Queen of Zhao first took charge of state affairs, Qin launched a sudden attack. Zhao sent a request for aid to Qi, but Qi replied, "We will dispatch troops only if you send the Lord of Chang'an to us as a good-faith hostage." The Queen flatly refused. Her ministers strongly remonstrated with her, but she told them in no uncertain terms, "I will spit in the face of the next person who tells me I must send the Lord of Chang'an as a hostage!"

The General of the Left, Chu Long, requested an audience with the Dowager Queen. She was sitting in a rage awaiting him as he entered the hall. Though he made an effort to hurry, he shuffled very slowly across to stand before her. "Your aged servant has an injured leg," he apologized. "I cannot walk very quickly. That is why it has been very long since I have been able to come see you. From my own ills I felt a sense of empathy, and concerned that your majesty might also be suffering from some ailment I have looked eagerly for an opportunity to visit your majesty."

The Queen replied, "I myself must depend upon a sedan chair to move about."

"May I trust that your majesty's appetite remains healthy?"

"I live entirely on gruel."

"I find that I am frequently without any appetite at all now," said Chu Long, "and so I force myself to walk three or four li each day. It lets me find a little pleasure in my food, and it is good for my body."

"I could not manage as much," said the Queen. Her fierce countenance had somewhat relaxed.

Chu Long said, "I have an offspring named Shuqi, my youngest son. He is a worthless youth, but in my dotage I love him dearly and wish that he could wear the black robes of the Palace Guard. And so your aged servant makes this request at the risk of his life!"

"I am pleased to approve it," said the Queen. "How old is he?"

“Only fifteen,” replied Chu Long. “Very young indeed. But it has been my hope to see him well taken care of before I fall by the wayside.”

“So men too dote upon their young sons?” asked the Queen.

“More than women.” replied Chu Long.

“Oh no,” laughed the Queen. “With mothers it is an extraordinary thing!”

“And yet,” continued Chu Long, “if I may be so bold, it seems your majesty loves your daughter, the Queen of Yan, more than your son, the Lord of Chang’an.”

“You are mistaken,” replied the Queen. “I am much fonder of the Lord of Chang’an.”

“When parents love their children,” said Chu Long, “they plan for their futures with great care. When you sent off your daughter off upon her marriage to the king of Yan, you clung to her heels and wept, bereft with grief that she was departing far away. But once she was gone, you prayed at every sacrifice saying, ‘Let her not return!’ It was not that you did not long for her, but that you were set on her future, and hoped that her sons and grandsons would one day sit upon the throne in Yan.”

“Yes, that is so” said the Queen.

“Now, from the time that Zhao first became a state until three generations ago, was there any younger son of the royal family who held an estate as a marquis whose descendants still hold that title?”

“No,” said the Queen.

“And this is not only so in Zhao. In other states, are there any descendants of such younger sons still in possession of the ranks of their forbears?”

“I have not heard of any.”

“In some of those cases,” said Chu Long, “the younger son met disaster in his lifetimes; in other cases it was his sons or grandson who encountered misfortune. How could it be that every such younger son was unworthy? Misfortune came to them because they were granted high honors without having achieved any merit, awarded rich gifts of land without having worked for them, and bestowed great emblems of rank and office. Now your majesty has honored your son with the title Lord of Chang’an and given him an estate of rich and fertile lands, bestowing on him great emblems of rank and office. Yet to this day you have not allowed him to do anything to win merit for the state of Zhao. Should the unthinkable happen and your majesty suddenly pass from the scene, what support could he rely on in the state of Zhao? It is because it seemed to me that you had not planned very carefully for his future that I presumed you did not seem to care as much for him as for your daughter, the Queen of Yan.”

“All right,” replied the Dowager Queen. “I leave it to you to arrange things as you see fit.” Thereupon the Lord of Chang’an was provided an escort of a hundred chariots and sent off as a good-faith hostage, and the troops of Qi were quickly dispatched.

(Zhanguo ce, “Zhao ce” 286)

We rarely see the process of applying manipulative principles so nicely presented as in this *Zhanguo ce* anecdote. And again, we see very little rhetoric here. No brilliant speech, no refined literary forms. Just a number of seemingly unrelated themes that are used to educe easy common sense commitments

to certain values from the Dowager Queen and a number of very subtle questions following these commitments. Chu Long starts with evoking her sympathy by presenting himself as weak and old, someone whom she does not have to be afraid of, someone whom she can identify with and someone who apparently did not come to discuss the sensitive matter of the Lord of Chang'an but to share his empathic concerns about her health. She therefore relaxes (太后之色少解), and it is in this very moment when she opens up (starts to fly) and comes to trust Chu Long that he starts to talk about his son and pretends to disclose the real motive for his visit. The Dowager Queen feels so secure in her comfortable role as generous and human ruler that she even starts joking with him so that she seems not to notice that Chu Long all of a sudden directed the conversation into a different direction that ostensibly evolved naturally from the harmless theme before although it involved, unexpectedly, the Lord of Chang'an, hooking her with this unexpected move. Now that he has figured out her feelings (*chuai qing* 揣情) he continues with an argument that still seems to be unrelated to the matter that enrages her so much and seems to talk about her motherly care. Chu Long links her motherly care with the question whether she planned as carefully for the future of her son as she did for the future of her daughter and is able to suddenly connect this seemingly unrelated question (which concerns the Queen very much) with the actual political situation providing an entirely new perspective on the case. In the end Chu Long is out of trouble as he didn't bring up the topic himself but presents his remonstrance perfectly disguised as if he just responded to the Dowager Queen's question why he thought that she cared more about her daughter than about her son, something she wanted to know and had asked him.

Eno writes: "It is likely that this account was preserved in the *Intrigues* because it so gracefully exemplifies a cardinal lesson of persuasion: that one's rhetorical moves much match the mood and character of the ruler addressed. Persuasion was not simply a matter of memorizing a bag of tricks; it was an art, as this anecdote clearly intends to illustrate."²²

But this anecdote is an exception in the *Zhanguo ce* which consists mainly of monologues. Different from the *Shuiyuan*, for example, in which Liu Xiang has mainly collected dialogues. Yet these mostly operate with clever and insightful sayings/responses which are used more like formulas, in the manner *Shi* or *Shu* quotations are used. We do find similar dialogues like the above also in the *Mengzi*, the *Zhuangzi*²³ and the remonstrance literature. It therefore is quite astonishing that we do not find any such anecdote in the text of the *Guiguzi* although it analyses exactly the kind of persuasive process which finds such masterly literary forms in other texts.

²² Ibid.

²³ Cf. the analysis of chapter 30 "Shuo jian" 說劍 in Graziani 2009.

The implied reader of the *Guiguzi*

The *Guiguzi* addresses readers that search for advice of how to effectively persuade their superiors. It does not reflect upon the consequences which these rhetoric skills entail for techniques of governance and does not offer advice to rulers how to protect themselves against such intrusive techniques of manipulation. In this respect the *Hanfeizi* appears like a response to the first part of the *Guiguzi* written from the perspective of the ruler. Discussing parallels between the arts of war and rhetoric Albert Galvani eloquently points out the particular consequences which are drawn in the *Hanfeizi* to protect the ruler against exactly those techniques which are elaborated so perspicuously in the *Guiguzi*.

“Besieged not only by the suggestive eloquence of wordsmiths, the sovereign is also exposed to their indiscreet gaze which seeks to detect and decipher his deepest emotions as they attempt to arouse his passions, desires and aversions through the power of their words. [...] However, in the exposition of all this in the *Han Feizi*, the ideal ruler must not be content with camouflaging his emotions and preventing them from coming to the surface and being detected by his subordinates but, still more radically, he must also completely suppress all his inclinations, preferences and aversions, which is to say all the elements of his emotional constitution. [...] In this resolute process of divestment, of emptying and even dehumanisation, the sovereign needs to take on all the negative characteristics of the Way that will attest to his superiority and command: he must appear as impassive, serene, immobile, invisible, unknowable, and so on. [...] Concealed in the depths of his palace, the sovereign remains in a perfect state of quiescence and inactivity and, without the least sign of emotion, he neutralises the attempts of his underlings to adjust their oral interventions to his leanings and predispositions, thus obliging them, as I have noted, to present themselves as simple (*su*) and straight (*zheng*). Now divested of any kind of determination, the sovereign becomes indistinguishable from spirits and phantoms. Like them, unseen he sees, unheard he hears, and unknown he knows. Just as, when one turns to the invisible spirits, there is no place for calculation or measurements (*shen zhi ge si, bu ke du si*), before this subtle, ineffable sovereign, subordinates are unable to scheme in advance and are forced to behave exactly as they are. [...] Making the best possible use of the information procured by his networks of surveillance and espionage, the impenetrable opacity in which he is shrouded, and the fact that the ones who must speak (and hence reveal themselves) are his possible adversaries, while he remains silent, the ideal sovereign conceived by the *Han Feizi* engineers a total disarming of the wily-tongued orators.”²⁴

This kind of entirely detached and undetermined attitude envisioned as the strongest position within the struggle of persuasions in the *Hanfeizi* is nowhere visible in the *Guiguzi*. In the first part we rather find a balance of opening up and showing oneself on the one side and closing and hiding oneself on the other as two different strategies to explore the interlocutor:

或開而示之。或闔而閉之。開而示之者。同其情也。闔而閉之者。異其誠也。
[The Sage] either opens up and shows himself or he remains closed and blocks others. He opens up and shows himself when he is in an identical situation with others, he remains closed and blocks others when he is in a different disposition.

Hanfeizi probably assumes that a ruler is always in a different disposition.

²⁴ Galvani 2012:

Like the *Hanfeizi* the second part of the *Guiguzi* is full of implicit references to the *Laozi* and many passages echo the first part of the *Guiguzi* like, for example, the beginning of section five of the *Basic Canon*'s²⁵ *Hidden Correspondences in Seven Sections* 本經陰符七篇:

散勢者，神之使也。用之必循間而動。威肅內盛。推間而行之則勢散。夫散勢者，心虛志溢。意失威勢。精神不專。其言外而多變。故觀其志意為度數。乃以揣說圖事。盡圓方。齊短長。

Breaking power is something effected by the spirit. When applying it you have to act in pursuit of [your counterpart's] open spaces [of weakness]. If your own strength is severe and abundant within and you exert it onto the open space [of your counterpart] then his power will be broken. Now, in case his power is broken, his mind is empty and his will is floating, his intent deteriorates and his strength is lost, his spirit is not focused and his speech misses the point and is inconsistent. You should therefore observe his will and intent, to measure the severity. You should then on this basis figure out the best persuasion strategies and plan matters, fully exhaust adaptive and normative approaches and make full use of short-term and long-term strategies.

The second part of the *Guiguzi* mainly deals with the strategic role of inner cultivation in securing power positions and constructs hidden correspondences between animals' hunting and protection techniques (in the titles of the sections), human inward cultivation (of subtle energies, the soul, the spirit, the mind, the thoughts, the inner organs, the intent and the will) and outward strategic action, including speech. Yet, these techniques of inner cultivation never aim at the spirit-like, dehumanised ideal of a sovereign as outlined by Galvany above. The *Guiguzi* does not develop theories about the perfect state of rulership, it presents techniques of persuasion and gaining power for those in deficient positions.

Conclusion

If rhetoric according to Aristotle is tentatively defined as “an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion”,²⁶ then the *Guiguzi* is certainly a book that teaches rhetoric. Kenneth Burke has in the late 1960s defined rhetoric as identification. According to him rhetoric was used as a means to resolve conflicts through identification.²⁷ The *Guiguzi* frequently uses the notion of *tong* 同/通 to express a very similar idea. Identification is one of the crucial strategies to win an interlocutor's favour as a condition to manipulate him. The method of checking and exploring other people's characters aims at constructing a common ground of identical kinds (*tonglei* 同類) to affect their feelings and exert control over them. In this very basic sense the *Guiguzi* does not differ from Western rhetoric. An important difference lies in the way people who should be persuaded are encountered. The main technique of the *Guiguzi* is empathy not imposition, negotiation not confrontation, responsiveness (*ying* 應) and adaption (*yin* 因) not normative rules, flexibility not

²⁵ As opposed to the following Middle Canon 中經.

²⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *The Rhetoric*, Book 1, first phrase of chapter 2 (1355b26f.). Transl. Kennedy 2007: 37.

²⁷ Burke 1969.

constant values.²⁸ In this point it resembles classical Chinese military lore,²⁹ and the authors of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* were clearly aware of this:

善說者若巧士，因人之力以自為力；因其來而與來，因其往而與往；不設形象，與生與長；而言之與響；與盛與衰，以之所歸；力雖多，材雖勁，以制其命。順風而呼，聲不加疾也；際高而望，目不加明也；所因便也。

Someone who is adept in the art of speaking resembles a skilful wrestler who, on adapting to the adversary's strength makes it his own by fully pulling him over when he moves towards him and by pushing him when he turns away. He does not set up his own shapes or figures but lives and grows in accordance with others, while his voice is an echo of theirs. With others he blossoms and withers whichever they turn to. However powerful or talented the other may be, he eventually takes control of his destiny. If one shouts with the wind the tone does not get louder. If one looks into the distance from an elevation the eye does not get more acute. This is just adapting to conveniences.³⁰

In contrast, classical Confucian positions, corrective rather than manipulative,³¹ in the *Mengzi* or Yang Xiong's work denounce this approach and oppose it to the normativity of ritual correctness or uprightness.

景春曰：“公孫衍、張儀，豈不誠大丈夫哉！一怒而諸侯懼，安居而天下熄。”
孟子曰：“是焉得為大丈夫乎！子未學禮乎？丈夫之冠也，父命之；
女子之嫁也，母命之。往送之門，戒之曰：『往之女家，必敬必戒，無違夫子。』
以順為正者，妾婦之道也。[...] 富貴不能淫，貧賤不能移，威武不能屈：此之謂大丈夫
Jing Chun said: “Gongsun Heng and Zhang Yi, these are really great men! Once angry and all the Regional Lords were frightened but when they were peaceful All under Heaven calmed down.”

Mengzi said: “How can these be said to be great men? Have you not properly studied the rites? The father is responsible for the capping ceremony of a young man. The mother is responsible for the wedding ceremony of a daughter. When she accompanies her to the main door on her leaving she admonishes her and says: ‘when you go to your husband’s family you must be respectful and careful and do not disobey your husband.’ Thus to take compliance as the correct course is the way of subordinate women. [...] When wealth and status cannot make him unbridled, poverty and mean condition cannot make him swerve from principle, and authority and power cannot make him bend: this can be called a great man.”³²

The basic difference between *Guiguzi*'s art of persuasion and both the orthodox Confucian and the Western approaches to persuasion might be another reason why this text has been neglected for so long in our discussions on Chinese rhetoric.

²⁸ Raphals 1992 calls this “metic intelligence”. For further comparative reflections see Lloyd 1996: 74-92.

²⁹ Coyle 1999: 246, 345-347, Galvany 2012: 23. Raphals 1992: 17 speaks of “verbal warfare”.

³⁰ Chen Qiyou 2002: chap. 15.5 (順說 opening phrase), 913. Translation partly based on Wilhelm 1971: 220-221, partly on Galvany 2012: 23 who adds in the footnote: “Su Qin 蘇秦 himself establishes an explicit relationship between the techniques of persuasion and diplomatic dexterity as a form of combat or war: Fan Xiangyong 范祥雍 2008: chap. XII.5, 670-676; Sima Qian 1959: chap. LXIX, 2242-2261. See also Raphals 1992: 117-123.”

³¹ Coyle 1999: 20, referring to Haun Saussy 1993.

³² *Mengzi* 3B2

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