

THE ORIGINS OF CHINESE NARRATIVE PROSE: FIFTEEN COLLECTIONS FROM “THE HISTORY OF THE HAN DYNASTY”*

As far as we know the first usage of the combination 小說, *xiaoshuo* (lit: “minor (petty) expressions”) appears in Zhuangzi's writings (庄子, 369—286 BC):

If, having taking a bamboo stick and a rope, one comes to a roadside ditch and begins to fish for fry, it is then hard to obtain a big fish; and telling petty tales (小說) for the sake of pleasing a district chief — is just as far from great accomplishments!” [1]

In this case *xiaoshuo* does not imply narrative prose at all, but rather a discourse about “petty” (小, *xiao*) matters as opposed to discourses of the elevated Way; in the best-case scenario these are some amusing “tales” meant to entertain its listeners.

The most known of the early interpretations of the term *xiaoshuo* is within the section of “Yi wen zhi” (藝文志, “Treatise on Art and Literature”) from the thirtieth *juan* of “Han shu” (漢書, “The History of the Former Han Dynasty”) by Ban Gu (班固, AD 32—92) (fig. 1), which says:

The trend of *xiaoshuo* school (小說家), evidently, starts from *beiguan*. It is that, which took shape from conversations on the street, gossips in the alleys, formed from that which was heard and told on one's way. Confucius once said: “It is certain that one has something to learn even on a narrow path, but if one strives for a remote [goal], he can soil himself [following this path], and that is why a noble man does not turn to it” [2]. However [a noble man] does not do away with [such paths] [3].

It speaks of rather specific written monuments depicting some base — in the spirit of Zhuangzi — stories of everyday and folk nature, which apparently had a lot in common with folklore — since Ban Gu draws a parallel with *beiguan* [4].

Ban Gu listed the names of fifteen texts of the school of *xiaoshuo*, the content of which, by all appearances, was rather diverse; attitude to it is also expressed un-

equivocally: in essence *xiaoshuo* is “a narrow path”, “a small way” (小道), where a noble man — *jun-zi* can undoubtedly derive something useful, but he has to be aware that “small ways” to attaining the great aim, that is the understanding of the Tao, do not guide by any means, and therefore one may “soil himself” following it; thus a noble man is cautious and gives credit to “narrow paths” — exactly what they are deserving: “The best of what minor rural experts have also needs to be gathered one thing to another so that it will not get lost in oblivion”. Out of this, as a matter of fact, the Chinese tradition of narrative prose literature has been formed. In order to be able to imagine which texts in particular provide the basis for Chinese narrative prose, let us particularly dwell on the list of Ban Gu.

Hou Zhong-yi (侯忠義, born in 1936), a modern Chinese philologist, believes that, judging by the names of collections cited by Ban Gu and his commentaries, as well as by the commentaries to “Han shu” of Yan Shigu, the lost works are divided into three categories: (i) works of historical nature; (ii) works of philosophic nature; and (iii) works of magic nature [5]. Unfortunately, of all these texts only names have come down to us whereas the collections themselves were lost before the reign of the Sui Dynasty (i. e. before 581). And we namely happen to deal with the names and indirect evidences. As it was already stated, the list of Ban Gu has fifteen names. These are:

1. “Yi yin shuo er shi qi pian” (伊尹說二十七篇, “Stories of Yi Yin in Twenty Seven Chapters”). Commentary: “The exposition is shallow and poor; looks as though it was written later”.

Yi Yin (伊尹, 1751?—1649? BC), a semilegendary ancient Chinese politician, high official and culinary expert, is known by the fact that although he came from lower classes since his childhood he displayed remarkable ability, comprehending book wisdom on his own, which in time allowed him first to become famous in cookery, and then make an amazing career — from

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a petty officer to the adviser of the ruler at the Shang court.

Adviser of Cheng Tang (成湯, 17th century BC) — the founder of the Shang Dynasty, who sent him to his suzerain, the last Xia sovereign Jie (桀, 1818—1763 BC); the latter could not put him to use and returned him to Cheng Tang. It went on like that for five times. After that he became the minister of Cheng Tang and actively participated in the passage against Jie and for his overthrow [6].

Yi Yin is considered to be the first “virtuous imperial adviser” (賢相, *xianxiang*), since he possessed outstanding moral traits, was incorruptible and his thoughts were directed only at serving his country and not at his own enrichment and power, — and in this regard Yi Yin became a role model and an example to follow by many subsequent generations of Chinese officials, about which one of Confucius's disciples said:

During the rule of the Tang Dynasty of Tianxia they elected out of everyday people and they recommended Yi Yin; [then] all those who had no love for mankind, [were forced to] pull themselves out [7].

Many of his biographical facts — including his “miraculous” birth — in the course of time adopted surprising details, and today therefore it is overly difficult to distinguish truth from fiction [8].

When it comes to “Yi yin shuo”, even Lu Xün noted that

in “The Treatise [on the Subject of Art and Literature]” from “[The History of] the Han [Dynasty]” in the Taoist school there are “Stories of Yi Yin” in fifty one chapters, lost at present; twenty seven chapters from the *xiaoshuo* school cannot be verified either, and “The Biography of Sima Xiang-ru” from “The Historical Notes” contains the following fragment from “The Book of Yi Yin” (伊尹書): “East of Jishan mountain a blue bird has its nest, and there are mandarin fruits that ripen in summer”, — this is the only passage that remained from the lost text” [9].

Of course, this fragment does not shed much light onto “Yi yin shuo”, even if we admit that Sima Qian (司馬遷, 145?—90 BC) implies this very text under “The Book of Yi Yin”. The attempts of Chinese researchers at ascertaining its overall nature and approximate creation date are not too helpful [10], although the commentaries to the record in “Han Shu” rather clearly interpret “Yi yin shuo” as an inauthentic work that is created much later than the time when Yi Yin lived. Famed philologist and bibliologist Zhang Shun-hui (張舜徽, 1911—1992) is more categorical: “The book is a fake, long lost” [11].

2. “Yu zi shuo shi jiu pian” (鬻子說十九篇, “Stories of Yu Ji” in Nineteen Chapters). Commentary: “That which was added by the descendants”.

It is known about the ancient Chinese wiseman and dignitary Yu Ji that his name was Xiong (熊), of the family name of Mi (鬻). At the age of nineteen Yu Ji was in the audience of Zhou Wen-wang, whom he im-

pressed so much that Wen-wang elevated him to the status of his adviser. According to “Shi ji” (*juan* 40, 楚世家), however, Yu Xiong died prematurely, having left only one son Xiong-li (熊麗), who, as well as his descendants, served the Zhou family, as a result of which they were granted the lands of Chu (the territory of modern-day Hubei province); therefore, Yu Xiong is considered to be the forefather of this ancient Chinese lands. The information on the biography of Yu Xiong, however, is also petty and contradictory: for instance, Wang Qi-zhou notes that in spite of the statement of Sima Qian that Yu presumably died at an early age, there were later sources that claim that he served not only Wen Wang, but also Wu Wang and Cheng Wang (Wen Wang alone reigned for about fifty years), and therefore he could not die at an early age; quite the opposite — he was a rare long-liver [12].

A historian of Chinese literature named Wang Zhi-zhong (王枝忠, born in 1944) notes that some scholars consider the remaining Taoist work “Yu zi” (鬻子) in its fragments as lost passages from “Yu zi shuo” [13]. In the section of Daoist works from “Yi wen zhi” in “Han shu” “Yu zi” is listed in twenty two chapters (only fourteen of them survived), whereas the commentary runs as follows: “[Yu-zi]’s name was Xiong, he became a Zhou advisor”. But Lu Xün also believed that “Yu zi shuo” had nothing to do with Daoism [14]. The situation with these two works is reminiscent of the aforementioned situation — with “Yi yin shuo” and “Yi yin shu”; Yu Xiong with time became the object of cult following among Chu population, the stories of it passed from mouth to mouth, and according to Wang Qi-zhou, they formed the foundation of “Yu zi shuo”, of which Yu Xiong was not the author [15]. However, it is evident from the aforementioned commentary in “Han shu”.

3. “Zhou kao qi shi liu pian” (周考七十六篇 “The Research of Zhou’ in Seventy Six Chapters”). Commentary: “Research of that which happened at the time of Zhou”.

A classic case of when not only the book itself came down to us, but also so did information about the author and at least some data that helps build suggestions about its content — apart from the evident commentary: “The research of that which happened at the time of Zhou”. Lo Ning, however, dates this work (as well as all the rest of the list of Ban Gu, with the exception of “Song zi” and “Qing shi zi”) back to Han times [16], but there is no way to confirm or confute this opinion of Lo Ning for now, as well as to appreciate Zhang Shun-hui’s impressions at their true value:

“The Research of Zhou” from the *xiaoshuo* school must be a book composed of various records, forgotten legends, insignificant and petty stories; that is the reason why it consists of seventy chapters. And even if it did contain lost information on the Zhou Dynasty, it is not what a person searching for that which happened at the time of Zhou would immediately rush to [17].

4. “Qing shi zi wu shi qi pian” (青史子五十七篇, “Master Historian’ in Fifty Seven Chapters”). Com-

mentary: “Records of events, made by an ancient historian”.

Majority of researchers agree that the term used in the title — *qing shi zi* (青史子), — is impersonal and denotes a petty official, serving in the field of history [18]. Out of this text, as a composite of other works — “Da dai li ji” (大戴禮記, “Notes of a Superior Dai on Rituals”) and “Feng su tong yi” (風俗通義, “Deep Meaning of Manners and Customs”) — three passages remained intact that speak of rituals and customs, and Lu Xün was puzzled as to “why at that time [i. e. during the Han times — I. A.] the text was included in *xiaoshuo*” [19]. For instance, here is the shortest of these three passages:

Hen is an animal from the east. When one year ends and a new one begins, the east is the first to come, and all that is living comes out in the open — that is why they worship hen [20].

In relation with this passage Hou Zhong-yi notes that it was a common custom to eat chicken on New Year in the pre-Qin era; it was believed that it brought luck — for it is rooster that gets up before everybody else does and serves as a herald of sunrise [21]. But it does not make any clearer why Ban Gu decided to include “Qing shi zi” in the section of *xiaoshuo*.

5. “Shi kuang liu pian” (師曠六篇, “Master Kuang’s in Six Chapters”). Commentary: “Compared it to ‘Chun qiu’; the exposition there is shallow and poor, equal in its essence with this book; thus I suspect it to be a forgery”.

As for Master Kuang (師曠 Sh-kuang), he is a legendary blind musician (the other name he is known by is Zi-ye (子野)), who lived prior to Confucius and served at the court of Duke Ping of Jin (reigned from 557 to 531 BC). It was not for thing that Master Kuang was called “master”, since at one time he was revered as the most skilful among musicians; besides, it is known that his talents did not concern only playing *guzhen*, but extended also to politics, where he repeatedly proved himself to be a wise adviser at the Jin throne. Master Kuang was also encyclopaedically knowledgeable. Ancient Chinese texts preserve stories that have to do with various episodes from the life of Kuang, concerning music in the first place, with the help of which he, according to legends, could subdue spirits and the elements [22].

Lu Xün noted that “Han Shu” also has another — eponymous — work related to Master Kuang, but it is listed in a different section (兵陰陽家, “Bing yin yang jia”) and has eight chapters and not six; and this work is of conjectural nature;

the same that is included in “*xiaoshuo*”, no possibility to research, and the only thing left to do is to rely on the commentary, from which we learn that [this book] in many ways is similar to “Chun qiu” [23].

That is, judging by the commentary, the book “Si kuang liu pian” was done according the model of “Chun qiu”, but later; and it was ascribed to the *xiaoshuo* sec-

tion since its content is “shallow and poor”, according to Lo Ning, “non-canonical”, and also obviously imitative [24].

6. “Wu cheng zi shi yi pian” (務成子十一篇, “Wucheng-zi’ in Eleven Chapters”). Commentary: “Contains the questions of Yao, but the exposition is not ancient”.

Wucheng-zi 務成子, also known as Wucheng Zhao (務成昭) (Wucheng Fu (務成附 / 跗) according to other versions) is a legendary adviser of the mythical emperor Yao (Shun according to a different version) and also an expert in “the art of inner chambers”, that is the art of sexual practice aimed at the prolongation of life. Little is known about Wucheng-zi; not one line has come down to us from this work. The commentary about the questions of Yao in the consideration of Wang Zhi-zhong, however, allows for assumption that this book was executed in the spirit of conversation of rulers with their advisers so typical for the pre-Qin booklore [25]. Wang Qi-zhou suggests that the work of “Wu cheng zi”, obviously not written by Wucheng Zhao himself, was compiled not later than the middle or the end of the Zhanguo period (403—221 BC) and was a collection of legends and myths related to the name of Wucheng Zhao, which actually conditioned this book to be included into the *xiaoshuo* section [26].

7. “Song zi shi ba pian” (宋子十八篇, “Song-zi’ in Eighteen Chapters”). Commentary: Song-zi, of the Sun Qin movement; the spirit of expressions of Huang-[di] and Lao-[zi] [that is Daoist — I. A.]”.

The name of Song-zi, in all likelihood, implies Song Jian 宋鉞 (also known as Song Keng (宋輕) or Song Rong (宋榮)), a Qi scholar-scribe and philosopher, a representative of the so-called “school of names”, whose views oftentimes are compared to the views of the school of Mo-zi (墨子, 468?—376 BC), a contemporary of Meng-zi (孟子, 372—289 BC). I will not dwell on what type of actual “movement” Song-zi adhered to in his views — similar to Mo-zi or to one of the founders of Confucianism, Song-zi (“the movement of Sun Qin” [27]), since it goes beyond the scope of this research. I will note, though, that Zhang Shun-hui wrote in regards to “Song zi shi ba pian”:

This is a collection, compiled by the descendents of Song-zi and then called it with his name; its style is shallow and poor, chaotic and unsystematic, not forming any separate school of thought — the only reason why it was included in the “*xiaoshuo*” school. If what is said in the commentary of Ban [Gu] concerning the spirit of expressions of Huang-[di] and Lao-[zi] corresponded to the truth, it would have been included into the Daoist school [28]!

On the other hand, though, Wang Qi-zhou, considering the suggestion of Guo Mo-ruo (郭沫若, 1892—1978) regarding the fact that several passages from “Song-zi” remained intact as parts of “Lü shi chun qiu” (呂氏春秋, “Springs and Autumns of Mister Lü”) and “Guan-zi” (管子), concludes that if it squares with reality, then the nature of such passages meets the criterion of “conver-

sations on the street and gossips in the alleys”, and thus the inclusion of “Song zi” into *xiaoshuo* is fully justified [29]. One would certainly need something more substantial for better-grounded reasoning, for instance the text of this monument and we unfortunately do not have it at our disposal.

8. “Tian yi san pian” (天乙三篇, “‘Tian-yi’ in Three Chapters”). Commentary: “Tian-yi — that is the way they called Tang; it does not speak of the Yin times, it is a forgery”.

Tang (湯) — the legendary founder of the Shang Dynasty (XVI century — 1066? BC), also known as Tang of Shang (商湯), Cheng-tang (成湯), Wu-tang (武湯), Tian-yi (天乙) and Da-yi (大乙), reigned from 1617 to 1588 BC. He was the ruler, to whom the aforementioned Yi Yin served in the capacity of adviser. In regards to this text Wang Zhi-zhong regretfully writes that there are no other evidences at our disposal [30]. Just as it is the case with many other characters of distant Chinese antiquity, the name of Tang have been coated with numerous legends, myths and conjectures “in many ways begotten by “conversations on the streets and gossips in the alleys”, that which was identified as judgments of village fools — but not to such degree that it did not have anything useful about it” [31]. That is, according to opinions of certain Chinese scholars, the main contents of this work were records of folklore nature that dwelled among people in oral tradition. “Tian yi san pian” is not mentioned in bibliographical works after the Han times — evidently it means that the book was lost right after Han.

9. “Huang di shuo sis hi pian” (黃帝說四十篇, “‘Expressions of Huang-di’ in Forty Chapters”). Commentary: “A preposterous forgery”.

The legendary progenitor Huang-di (黃帝, the Yellow emperor) is ascribed many historical accomplishments contributing to the establishment of Chinese civilization — the invention of axe, bow and arrows, mortar and pestle, shoes and dress (different for men and women), carts and boats, the technique of tripod and bell casting, the method of well-sinking, as well as significant contribution to music, pharmacology and the art of healing. Huang-di is a frequent character of ancient Chinese texts, and a rather mythologized one at that. Apparently that was the case in this instant as well:

Mentioned in “The Treatise [of Art and Literature]” from “[The History of] the Han [Dynasty]”, “Expressions of Huang-di in Forty Chapters” were written during the time of Zhanguo, in its essence it is a large collection of myths [32].

On the other hand, Lo Ning believes that

“Huang di shuo” is not a work of the pre-Qin time, but rather a forgery of court magi of the time of the Emperor Wu of Han (reigned in the course of 140—87 BC)” [33].

A famous historian of Chinese narrative prose, Li Jian-guo (李劍國, b. 1943), shared his view saying that,

possibly, two passages from “Huang di shuo” have come down to us as parts of sixth and eight *juans* of “Feng su tong yi”, where “Huang di shu” (黃帝書, “The Book of Huang-di”) is indicated as its source [34]. Here is one of them:

Tai-di told Su-nü to play psaltery *se* [35] of fifty strings and was so deeply moved that he could not come to his senses on account of melancholy, and thus smashed the psaltery and made it into [one] of twenty five strings.

Wang Zhi-zhong notes that if we were to judge by these passages, then the opinion of Ban Gu about “Expressions of Huang-di” in terms of “preposterous forgery” is not unfounded [36].

10. “Feng chan fang shuo shi ba pian” (封禪方說十八篇, “‘Expressions of Magic Thanksgiving to Heavens and Earth’ in Eighteen Chapters”). Commentary: “Of the times of the Emperor of Wu”.

The term *fengchan* here implies the offering ceremony to Heavens and Earth, which in ancient China took place on the mountain of Taishan, where emperors invoked Heavens to send down prosperity on the country or addressed Heavens in those cases when certain significant signs were sent down that required communication with Heavens, and it was called *feng* (封); and at the foot of Taishan also, where sacrifices were made to Earth, and it was called *chan* (禪). Both had special altars for this type of offerings. The term *fengchan* comes up for the first time in “Guan-zi” (管子); it is known that offerings of this kind were already a custom in the times of Qin and Han.

According to the view of Zhang Shun-hui, this work is a compilation of

records of superstitions related to souls of the dead and spirits reigning in the times of the Emperor Wu of Han, and reasonings about them. Magi valued such things, Confucians rejected those — hence, the reason why this book did not gain ground [37].

Wang Zhi-zhong, citing Yu Jia-xi, writes that judging by the indirect data, “Feng chan fang shuo” contained discussions of magi and Confucian scholars concerning offerings to Earth and Heavens, but the non-Confucian views prevailed nevertheless, which is indicated by *fang* (方) in the title — in its essence *fangshu* (方術), a magic art [38]. It is hard to say something more definite about a book long lost.

11. “Dai zhao chen ran xin shu er shi wu pian” (待詔臣饒心術二十五篇, “‘The Art of Pithy by Loyal Subject Ran, Expecting Decrees’ in Twenty Five Chapters”). Commentary: “Of the Times of the Emperor of Wu. [Yan] Shi-gu reports: ‘In ‘Individual Records’ Liu Xiang (劉向, 77—6 BC) writes that Ran, born in Qi, whose family name is unknown, was *daizhao* (expecting decrees) in the times of the Emperor Wu, wrote a book titled ‘The Art of the Pithy’”.

The catalogue of Yuan Xing-pei (袁行霈, b. 1936) and Zhong-yi suggests that “loyal subject Ran”, since it

*Fig. 1*

is known that he was a native of the Qi estate, might have been a disciple and follower of Song-zi [39], who as a matter of fact taught in Qi and his ideas concerning the notion that the ruler in a country is similar to a heart in one's body, were included into the chapter of "Xin shu" (心術, "The Art of the Pithy") of the final edition of "Guan-zi", made in 26 BC. The meaning of the title "Xin shu" is explained by Zhang Shun-hui by means of 主術, 君道 — "the art of the ruling", "the way of the ruler" [40], which is rather evident, taking into consideration the specific character of the teaching of the founder of Legalism, Guan Zhong (管仲 ? — 645 BC), by whose name the treatise was titled. He was the first one in Chinese history who suggested and substantiated the concept of ruling the country on the basis of laws. Wang Zhi-zhong thinks that the content of "Dai zhao chen ran xin shu" could be similar to the content of the chapter of "Xin shu" from "Guan-zi" [41].

12. "Dai zhao chen an cheng wei yang shu yi pian" (待詔臣安成未央術一篇. "The Art of the Interminable by Loyal Subject An Cheng, Expecting Decrees' in One Chapter"). Commentary: "Ying Shao (應劭 ? — 202) reports: 'A Daoist school. The art of the interminable — study related to the nursing of life'".

Yu Jia-xi believes that "he, who is called loyal subject An Cheng, expecting decrees, is a court magician" [42]. Wang Zhi-zhong notes that "the art of interminable" is a certain study that has to do with the prolongation of sexual life [43]. What this work is doing in the section of *xiaoshuo* is not quite clear; it should have rather been ranked among magic books.

13. "Chen shou zhou ji qi pian" (臣壽周紀七篇, "Records of Zhou, [Made by Loyal Subject Shou] in Seven Chapters"). Commentary: "[Shou] is a native of Yu, which is in the estate of Xiang [44]. Of the times of the Emperor Wu".

A number of Chinese scholars believe that judging by its title the work contained records of various events, that are time-wise related to the time of Zhou Dynasty [45]. We then have nothing else to assume about it either.

14. "Yu chu zhou shuo jiu bai sis hi san pian" (虞初周說九百四十三篇, "Expressions of Yu Chu of Zhou' in Nine Hundred Forty Three Chapters"). Commentary: "[Yu Chu] is a native of the lands to the south of [Huang]he. In the times of Han Wu-di (the Emperor Wu of Han) he was a court magician in the most august suite and was known as 'the minister of the yellow chariot' (黃車使者). Ying Shao reports: 'The foundation of his expressions is 'The History of the Zhou [Dynasty]'. [Yan] Shi-gu reports: 'It is said in 'Shi ji' that Yu Chu is a native of Luoyang, and it speaks of him in Zhang Heng's (張衡, 78—139) 'The Ode to the Western Capital': 'Nine hundred stories, and all of them come from Yu Chu'".

It is known of Yu Chu (虞初, 140?—87 BC), who served at the Han court under the Emperor Wu, that he held the office of *fangshi shilang* (something similar to

a servant magician of the guards of the palace chambers). There is an extremely small amount of information on Yu Chu. Sima Qian reports of one of his acts which took place in 104 BC:

Ding Fu-ren (丁夫人), Yu Chu of Luoyang and others were offering sacrifices with the help of magic for the purpose of bringing misfortune upon Xiongnu and on the kingdom of Dawan [46].

Regarding the "nickname" of Yu Chu it is known that he "handled horses, wore a yellow garments and was called 'the minister of the yellow chariot'" [47].

As it is the case with other texts from the list of Ban Gu, "Yu Chu zhou shuo" has not come down to us and is not anymore listed in the bibliographic department of the history of the Sui Dynasty. And thus by that time already the text had been irretrievably lost. Judging by that which Ying Shao says in the commentary, the main materials that Yu Chu used for his work were Zhou historical records. Lu Xün paid attention to the fact that according to the conclusions of Qin textual critic, a specialist in the study of Zhou, Zhu You-zeng (朱右曾, 19th century), there is a probability that we have three passages at our disposal, which were presumably included in "Yu Chu zhou shuo" [48]. Wang Qi-zhou, on the assumption of the notion that "magi were the foundation of the school of *xiaoshuo* of the Han era; the stories of magic were the main form of narrative prose of Han era", as well as on the basis of the surviving passages from "Yu chu zhou shuo" and the field of occupation of the author of the text, concludes that this whole text had a similar nature, that is that it was devoted to magic and striking cases from Zhou history [49]. And indeed it is so:

[Once upon a time], when Mu-wang (穆王, reigned from 977 to 922 BC) was hunting, a black bird, resembling a turtle-dove, dashed as a lightning towards [his horse] and sat on the harness; the stableman lashed [the bird] with a whip and killed it; the horse bolted forward and with such a speed that nobody could stop it until it stumbled and fell, and the sovereign wounded his left leg.

The peculiarities of the frame of mind of the epoch undoubtedly had an effect on this work as well as on other Han collections of *xiaoshuo* that never came down to us; at least, in Zhang Heng's work it actually says: "Nine hundred stories (小說, *xiaoshuo*), and all of them come from Yu Chu", and the commentary of Xue Zong (薛綜, 176—243) on the subject of *xiaoshuo* reads:

[It has to do with] the art of healing, invocation of spirits, warding off of misfortunes and supplications for happiness. Altogether [Yu Chu] had nine hundred and forty three [stories], although it says — nine hundred; which only implied a great many. Such texts containing secrets (秘書, *mishu*) were collected and always kept about; these were everyday tools that helped answer the questions that arise in the Sovereign's mind [50].

It is clear even on account of the aforementioned passage that the content of “Yu chu zhou shuo” was by no means exhausted by magic orientation, but was significantly broader, including records of various surprising cases and events that took place in the Zhou time. Apparently it was a compendium of knowledge about the surprising, where, according to Yu Jia-xi, “there was everything and more” [51], and Chen Zi-li calls “Yu chu zhou shuo” “stories of the surprising, containing records of the extraordinary and narratives of the strange” [52]. A tradition with a known foundation for it claims Yu Chu to be one of the founders of narrative prose — at least in the capacity of collector and compiler. Hence his nickname “the minister of the yellow chariot” in later times was used in place of allegorical and collective designation for the *xiaoshuo* authors (it

is a rather rare occurrence, though, in ancient Chinese texts).

15. “Bai jia bai san shi jiu juan” (百家百三十九卷 “Works of Various Authors in One Hundred Thirty Nine Scrolls”).

It was Lu Xün who paid attention to the notion that “Bai jia” in the collection of “Shuo yuan” (說苑, “The Garden of Expressions”) of the Han man of letters Liu Xiang is characterized as a collection of passages that were not ranked among philosophical works, petty and insignificant in content and not corresponding to the true discourses of the great Tao [53]. Wang Zhi-zhong speaks of two passages that remained as a part of “Feng su tong yi”, presumably from “Bai jia”, and concludes that judging by them the view of Liu Xiang is well-grounded [54].

Notes

1. *Zhuang-zi shi yi*, Ouyang Jing-xian, Ouyang Chao bian (庄子釋譯 / 歐陽景賢, 歐陽超編, “Zhuang-zi” with interpretation and translation in modern Chinese language, compiled by Ouyang Jing-xian and Ouyang Chao) (Xianning, 1986), ii, p. 296.

2. Lun yu, XIX, 4. The words quoted by Ban Gu belong not to Confucius but rather to his disciple Zi-xia (子夏, Bu Shang 卜商, 507?—? BC).

3. Ban Gu (班固), *Han shu* (漢書, The History of Han [Dynasty]) (Beijing, 1962), vi, *juan* 30, p. 1745.

4. A little is known about *baiguan* (稗官). There is a settled opinion in our oriental studies that believes that *baiguan* is a title of a special position, where the person in charge “was responsible for registering (apparently, not so much writing it down as much as it was memorizing) that, which was ‘told on the streets and talked about in the alleys’” (I. S. Lisevich, *Literaturnaia mysl' Kitaia na rubezhe drevnosi i srednikh vekov* (The Literary Thought of China at the Threshold between Antiquity and the Middle Ages) (Moscow, 1979), p. 182); however, a number of researchers use a different reading — of obscure origin — of the first hieroglyph *bai* (稗) — *bi*: “Special officials (*biguan*) wrote down folklore...” (K. I. Golygina, “Povestvovatel'naia proza na literaturnom iazyke vën'ian” (“Narrative prose in literary language of *wenyan*”), *Dukhovnaia kul'tura Kitaia: énciklopediia*, ed. by M. L. Titorenko (Moscow, 2006), iii, p. 79). Large Chinese-Russian dictionary states that *baiguan* is “an official responsible for small articles (collecting street poems for the emperor)” (*Bol'shoi kitaisko-russkii slovar'* (Large Chinese-Russian Dictionary), ed. by I. M. Oshanin (Moscow, 1983—1984), ii, p. 814). Meanwhile, Ch. Hucker (1919—1994) fairly defines *baiguan* as “petty official: not a title, but a descriptive term for officials of low rank” (Ch. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, 1985), p. 361). In the mentioned section of “Yi wen zhi” from “Han shu” it says: “The movement of the *xiaoshuo* (小說家) school, apparently, begins out of *baiguan* (稗官)”. The commentary of Ru Chun (如淳, ca. 189—265), who lived under the rule of Wei at the time of the Three Kingdoms period runs as follows:

“Nine Tunes” [a poetic cycle from “Chu Stanzas” — I. A.]: “Choice rice is birthed from chaff (稗)”. Petty and scattered talks from conversations on the street and gossips in the alleys — this is what it is. Rulers, desiring to know the moods and attitudes of the commoners, established the office of *baiguan* officials for this particular purpose — that they would explain those [conversations and gossips] to them. Up to this day they refer to insignificant conversations as *bai* (稗), ‘trifling’”.

Tang commentator Yan Shi-gu (顏師古, 581—645) specifies that “*baiguan* are petty officers” (Ban Gu, *op. cit.*, *juan* 30). As a matter of fact, this is the earliest fundamental information of *baiguan* that has come down to us, upon which our notion of the fact that it once was a particular existing official position is based. Yu Jia-xi (余嘉錫, 1884—1955), having inspected corresponding ancient written monuments in detail, did not find any other evidence, which would reveal the content of administrative duties of *baiguan*, apart from the aforementioned — i. e. the gathering of data concerning attitudes of common people, and concluded that the term *baiguan* does not stand for a position, but rather for “scholarly service men (士, *shi*) of the Son of Heavens” (Yu Jia-xi (余嘉錫), “Xiaoshuojia chyu baiguan shuo” (小說家出于稗官說, “Of the school of *xiaoshuo*, born out of *baiguan* stories”), *Yu Jia-xi wen shi lunji* (Changsha, 1997), i, p. 248). Professor of Beijing University, Pan Jian-guo (潘建國, b. 1969) noted that the text of “Chu Stanzas” mentioned by Ru Chun does not have the passage about tares, but it mentions *bai* (稗), that is choice rice; the similarity of sound of hieroglyphs different in meaning has birthed confusion and eventually an error, which has continued to this day. In the pre-Qin, Qin and Han texts *bai* (稗) is used either in its direct meaning — “weed”, “tares”, or in the meaning of “low”, “of humble birth”, “disdainable”, but by no means it qualifies for the meaning of “small”, as is written by Yan Shi-gu of Tang, based on the commentary of Ru Chun (Pan Jian-guo (潘建國), “Baiguan shuo” (稗官說, “Of *baiguan*”), *Wenxue pinglun* II (1999), p. 76). It is also significant that among the pre-Qin (for instance, Zhou) official functionaries known to us the term *baiguan* does not appear; in the person of *baiguan* we deal, as concluded by Yu Jia-xi, with a generalized name for certain petty (*bai* (稗) in the meaning of *xiao* (小)) officials of the *shi* (士) type, whose functions also included reporting of gossips to the sovereign, the gossips that were circulating among people (*shi zhuan yan* (士傳言), “official men convey conversations”). In Han times *baiguan* was allegorically referred to as a category of officials, whose stipend was lower than six hundred *shi* of grain, that is, according to the

meaning that was implied by Ru Chun (special officials designated for the purpose of gathering rumours), they also have nothing in common with. It needs to remember that “petty” (*xiao* (小)) relating to a Han official does not necessarily mean the smallest clerk of the most insignificant position, for the main watershed, if I may, passed along the size of the stipend, as modern researcher Lo Ning (羅寧, b. 1971) emphasizes: less than or more than six hundred *shi* of grain. More than six hundred *shi* was given to high-ranking officials — for instance, *gong* and *qing*; and all of the rest — were given less than six hundred, hence those ones were “petty officials” (小官, *xiaoguan*) (Lo Ning (羅寧), “Xiaoshuo yu baiguan” (小說與稗官, “Narrative prose and *baiguan*”), *Sichuan daxue xuebao* VI (1999), p. 55).

It is known that in the Zhou times a number of officers in their line of duty were obligated to inform the ruler of various local stories, legends and myths circulating among people as well as of attitudes of his subjects in various parts of the country. Among this type of officials Pan Jian-guo ranks *tuxün* (土訓, geographer and soil scientist), *tongxün* (誦訓, reciter and speaker) and *xünfangshi* (訓方氏, district educator and tutor), although their duties were far from being reduced to these only. In Han times such functions were passed on to court advisers and magi, who, besides the aforesaid, must have been specialists in the field of life extension and magical means of acquisition of immortality (Pan Jian-guo, *op. cit.*, p. 83).

Thus, it becomes very obvious that *baiguan* as an individual position, specifically established for the purpose of gathering rumours and gossips, never existed in China; under the term *baiguan* (on the analogy of *xiaoguan*) one must understand “not a title”, but rather a wide range of not-so-high-ranking officials, whose duties in one way or another could be related with a possibility of acquiring information concerning the attitudes of common people in all sorts of manifestations. This is what Lo Ning writes: “And when it talks about *baiguan*, which gave birth to the school of *xiaoshuo*, then it probably refers to officials of the *lang* rank — court advisers or *daizhao* (待詔, ‘waiting for the highest orders’), which are of even lower position...” (Lo Ning, “Xiaoshuo yu baiguan”, p. 55). Concerning the issue of *baiguan* see also: Tang Ji-fan (唐潔璠), “Han shu. Yi wem zhi’ xiaoshuojia zai kaobian” (“漢書。藝文志” 小說家再考辯, “Once again concerning the school of *xiaoshuo* from ‘The Notes on Arts and Literature’ of ‘The Book of Han [History]’”), *Mingzuo xinshang* XII (2008); Yang Fei (楊菲), “Baiguan weishizhi zhiliu lun” (稗官為史之支流論, “Of *baiguan*, as a source of historical data”), *Fujian shifan daxue xuebao* I (2006); Zhao Yan, Zhang Shi-chao (趙岩, 張世超), “Lun Qin Han jianduzhongde baiguan” (論秦漢簡牘中的“稗官”, “*Baiguan* from ancient documents from the time of Qin and Han”), *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* III (2010), (the last work also presents great interest on account of the notion that it generalizes the existing views in Chinese science on the issue of *baiguan* — for early 2010); etc.

5. Hou Zhong-yi (侯忠義), *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo shigao* (中國文言小說史稿, Draft History of Chinese Narrative Prose in Classical Language) (Beijing, 1990), i, p. 5. Lu Xün (魯迅, 1881—1936) believed that seven of these texts were the views of the ancient (“Yi yin shuo”, “Yu zi shuo”, “Shi kuang”, “Wu cheng zi”, “Song zi”, “Tian yi”, “Huang di shuo”), two of them contain the records of ancient events (“Zhou kao”, “Qing shi zi”), four belong to Han authors (“Feng chan fang shuo”, “Dai zhao chen rao xin shu”, “Chen shou zhou ji”, “Yu chu zhou kao”), and “Dai zhao chen an cheng wei yang shu” and “Bai jia” apparently belong to the Han times, too (Lu Xün (魯迅), *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* (中國小說史略, A Capsule History of Chinese Narrative Prose) (Beijing, 2006) p. 27).

6. Quoted according to *Konfucianskoe chetveroknzhie* (“*Sy shu*”) (Confucius’s “Tetrateuch” (“*Si shu*”), transl. and commented by A. I. Kobzev, A. E. Luk’ianov, L. S. Perelomov, P. S. Popov with assistance of V. M. Maïorov (Moscow, 2004), p. 406.

7. Lun yu. XII. 22. Quoted from the book of L. S. Perelomov, *Konfucii: “Lun’ iui”*. *Issledovanie, perevod s kitaïskogo, kommentarii. Faksimil’nyi tekst “Lun’ iuia” s kommentariiami Chzhu Si* (Confucius: “Lun yu”. Research, translation from Chinese with commentary. Facsimile text of “Lun yu” with the commentary of Zhu Xi) (Moscow, 1998), p. 387.

8. For more details about Yi Yin from the latest Chinese works see: Gong Wei-ying (龔維英), “Lun Yi Yin” (論伊尹, “Of Yi Yin”), *Shehui kexuejia* IV (1992); Zhang Hui (張輝), “Zhongguo diyi xiande zaixiang Yi Yin” (中國第一賢德宰相伊尹, “The first Chinese virtuous minister Yi Yin”), *Lishi daguan* V (2006); Liu De-jie (劉德杰), “Yi Yin shiji kaoshu” (伊尹史跡考述, “Research of historical evidence for Yi Yin”), *Luoyang shifan xueyuan xuebao* I (2008); Zhang Qi-cheng, Fu Xing-xing (張啟成, 傅星星), “Shang chu xianxiang Yi Yin xinlun” (商初賢相伊尹新論, “Something new about Yi Yin, the virtuous minister of the early Shang rule”), *Guizhou wenshi congkan* I (2009); etc. The mythologized (based mostly on “Lü shi chun qiu” (呂氏春秋, “Springs and Autumns of Mister Lü”), the section of 本味 version of Yi Yin’s biography in Russian language can be found in the book of Yuan Ke, *Mify drevnego Kitaia* (The Myths of Ancient China), transl. by E. I. Lubo-Lesnichenko, E. V. Puzitskii, V. F. Sorokin (Moscow, 1987), pp. 215—8. In 2008 RPC saw the establishment of Research Society of Nutrition Culture According to Yi Yin.

9. Lu Xün, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue*, p. 27.

10. Thus, Professor Wang Qi-zhou (王齊洲, b. 1951) states his assumption that “Yi yin shuo” is not such a young work of art, and was written most likely under Qin (221—206 BC) or maybe even under Han; at least under Han this text had not yet been lost (Wang Qi-zhou (王齊洲), “Han zhi’ zhuluzhi xiaoshuojia ‘Yi yin shuo’, ‘Yu zi shuo’ kaobian” (“漢志” 著錄之小說家“伊尹說” “鬻子說” 考辨, “Research based on ‘Expressions about Yi Yin’ and ‘Expressions about Yu-zi’, included in ‘The Han Treatise [of Literature and Art]’ into the school of *xiaoshuo*”), *Wuhan daxue xuebao* V (2006), p. 563). See also: Wang Na, Li Xin-xia (王娜, 李新霞), “Han shu yi wen zhi’ xiaoshuojia tanjiu” (“漢書。藝文志” 小說家探究, “Research of school of *xiaoshuo* from ‘The Treatise of Art and Literature’ of ‘The History of the Han [Dynasty]’”), *Changjiang shifan xueyuan xuebao* III (2010); Yao Juan (姚娟), “Dui ‘Han shu yi wen zhi’ zhong xiaoshuojia mingmingde sikao” (對“漢書。藝文志” 中小說家命名的思考, “Reflections on the name of ‘the school of *xiaoshuo*’ from ‘The Treatise of Art and Literature’ of ‘The History of the Han [Dynasty]’”), *Hainan daxue xuebao* V (2008); etc.

11. Zhang Shun-hui (張舜徽), “Han shu yi wen zhi’ tongshi” (“漢書藝文志” 通釋 “General interpretation of ‘The Treatise of Art and Literature’ of ‘The History of the Han [Dynasty]’”) (Wuhan, 1990), p. 195.

12. Wang Qi-zhou, “‘Han zhi’ zhuluzhi xiaoshuojia ‘Yi yin shuo’, ‘Yu zi shuo’ kaobian”, p. 563. For more details on Yu Xiong see Yin Hua-bing (尹弘兵), “Yu Xiong shishi jixi” (鬻熊史事解析, “The analysis of historical data on Yu Xiong”), *Jiangnan luntan* V (2008); Ding You-guo (丁有國), “Yu Xiong shi Chuguo xianzu jiechude zhengzhijia” (鬻熊是楚國先祖杰出的政治家, “Yu Xiong — the distinguished politician, the forefather of the kingdom of Chu”), *Ezhou daxue xuebao* VI (2008); Cao Sheng-gao (曹勝高), “Yu-zi kaosuo” (鬻子考索, “The research of Yu-zi”), *Wenxue yichan* II (2000); etc.

13. Wang Zhi-zhong (王枝忠), *Han Wei Liuchao xiaoshuo shi* (漢魏六朝小說史, The History of Narrative Prose of the Eras of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties) (Hangzhou, 1997), p. 27.

14. Lu Xün, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue*, p. 27.

15. Wang Qi-zhou, “‘Han zhi’ zhuluzhi xiaoshuojia ‘Yi yin shuo’, ‘Yu zi shuo’ kaobian”. Zhang Shun-hui: “This is the case similar to that of the book ‘Yi yin shuo’ — both are compiled by descendants imitating antiquity” (Zhang Shun-hui, *op. cit.*, p. 196).

16. Lo Ning, “‘Huang di shuo’ ji qita ‘Han zhi’ xiaoshuo” (“皇帝說”及其他“漢志”小說, “‘Expressions of Huang-di’ and other narrative prose from ‘The Treatise of Art and Literature’ of ‘The History of the Han [Dynasty]’”), *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao* III (1999), p. 55.

17. Zhang Shun-hui, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

18. Although some sources inform us that it implies the son of the Jin (8th—5th centuries BC) court historiographer Dong Hu (董狐), famed for his impartiality and accuracy in registering events (see Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 28), and the title thus needs to be translated as “The Son of Mister Historian”.

19. Lu Xün, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue*, p. 28. According to the data of famed textual critic Cheng Yi-zhong (程毅中, b. 1930), by the time of the rule of the Liang Dynasty (AD 502—557) one *juan* from “Qing shi zi” was preserved, but it too was lost by the time of the rule of the Sui Dynasty (Cheng Yi-zhong (程毅中), *Gu xiaoshuo jianmu* (古小說簡目, A Capsule Catalogue of Old Xiaoshuo) (Beijing, 1986), p. 3).

20. Lu Xün, “Gu xiaoshuo goushen” (古小說鈎沈, “Extracts from the ‘Book of Old Prose’”), *Lu Xün quanji* (Shanghai, 1973), viii, p. 125.

21. Hou Zhong-yi (侯忠義), *Han Wei Liuchao xiaoshuo shi* (漢魏六朝小說, The History of Narrative Prose of the Eras of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties) (Shenyang, 1989), p. 7.

22. I cannot keep from citing, perhaps, one of the most known episodes concerning the skill of Kuang, which is a part of “Shi ji” (史記, “Historical Notes”). It particularly says that:

...Shi-kuang was forced to take *guqin* in his own hands and pick the strings. When he first played this melody, sixteen black cranes showed up out of nowhere and gathered at the gate of the gallery. When the melody was played for the second time, the cranes stretched out their necks and began to cry, stretched out their wings and began to dance. Duke Ping, rather pleased, got up off his seat and congratulated Shi-kuang, wishing him longevity. Having returned to his seat, he asked: “Is there a sadder type of music than the one just played?” To which Shi-kuang replied affirmatively: “Yes, there is! It was performed in the past, when Huangdi was gathering all spirits, but you have only minor virtues and are therefore unworthy of listening to it, and if you do listen to it, you life then is in great danger”. Duke Ping objected “I am an old man. The only thing I love is music and I want to listen to it to the very end”. Shi-kuang was forced to pick *guqin* again and strike the strings. When he performed it for the first time, a white cloud appeared in the northwest. When the melody was played for the second time, strong wind blew, which was followed by rain. The wind tore the tiling off the gallery; all people in attendance scattered and frightened Duke Ping fell facedown between rooms in the gallery. After these events, the estate of Jin was overtaken by great drought and the land laid absolutely barren for three years”

(translated by V. S. Taskin. Quoted from the book titled “*Guo yu*” (The Discourses of the Kingdoms), transl., introduction and notes by V. S. Taskin (Moscow, 1987), pp. 407—8). For more detailed information about Master Kuang see, for instance: Lei Jia-shen (雷家駟), “Guanyu shi Kuang” (關於師曠, “Of Master Kuang”), *Jiaoxiang Xian yinyuan xuebao* IV (1986); Zhou Zhu-quan. Gudai yinyuejia shi Kuang (周柱銓. 古代音樂家師曠 The Ancient Musician Master Kuang), *Yinyue aihaozhe* I (1982); etc.

23. Lu Xün, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue*, p. 29.

24. Lo Ning, “‘Huang di shuo’ ji qita ‘Han zhi’ xiaoshuo”, p. 53.

25. Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

26. Wang Qi-zhou, “‘Haym shu yi wen zhi’ zhuluzhi xiaoshuojia ‘Wu cheng zi’ deng sijia kaobian” (“漢書藝文志”著錄之小說家“務成子”等四家考辨, “Research of ‘Wucheng-zi’ and three other works included into the school of *xiaoshuo* in ‘The Treatise of Art and Literature’ of ‘The History of the Han [Dynasty]’”), *Nanjing shifan daxue wenxuyuan xuebao* I (2008), p. 2. Zhang Shun-hui: “This book of eleven chapters, probably, showed up in *xiaoshuo* only on account of being compiled from conversations and various discourses” (Zhang Shun-hui, *op. cit.*, p. 197).

27. The second name of Sun-zi (荀子, 313—238 BC) was Qing (卿). Under the Han emperor Xuan-di (reigned from 74 to 49 BC) when the hieroglyph *xun* (荀) was declared to be a taboo since in its sound it was identical with the name of the emperor, whose name was Sun (詢), Sun-zi was also renamed — his last name was replaced by Sun (孫), similar in its sounding, as a result of which Sun-zi is also known by the name of Sun Qing.

28. Zhang Shun-hui, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

29. Wang Qi-zhou, “‘Haym shu yi wen zhi’ zhuluzhi xiaoshuojia ‘Wu cheng zi’ deng sijia kaobian”, pp. 3—4. Also, concerning “Song zi shi ba pian” see Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Wang Qi-zhou, “‘Haym shu yi wen zhi’ zhuluzhi xiaoshuojia ‘Wu cheng zi’ deng sijia kaobian”, p. 4.
32. Zhang Shun-hui, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
33. For more details see: Lo Ning, “‘Huang di shuo’ ji qita ‘Han zhi’ xiaoshuo”, p. 50 and the following pages. See also: Wang Qi-zhou, “‘Haym shu yi wen zhi’ zhuluzhi xiaoshuojia ‘Wu cheng zi’ deng sijia kaobian”, pp. 5—6.
34. “Although the titles of these books differ in one hieroglyph, these hieroglyphs nevertheless are very similar: *shuo* (說) is practically *shu* (書), and *shu* (書) is practically *shuo* (說). Ancient books initially had no titles, hence these discrepancies” (Li Jian-guo (李劍國), *Tangqian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi* (唐前志怪小說史, The History of Pre-Tang Stories about the Amazing) (Tianjin, 1984), p. 123).
35. Tai-di (泰帝) is a mythical emperor Fu Xi (伏羲, reigned from 2852 to 2737 BC), whom the Chinese people owe their hunting skills, fishing skills and meat-cooking skills, the formation of eight trigrams, as well as the invention of hieroglyphic written language and the psaltery proper (and then their improvement by means of breaking in two; Su-nü (素女) is a feminine deity from the circle of Huang Di, known as a tutoress in the field of the art of “inner chambers”, as well as in the capacity of an exceptional musician and singer. Psaltery *se* is one of the most ancient Chinese stringed musical instruments played by plucking.
36. Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
37. Zhang Shun-hui, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
38. Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
39. Yuan Xing-pei, Hou Zhong-yi (袁行霈, 侯忠義), *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo mulu* (中國文言小說書目, A Catalogue of Chinese *Xiaoshuo* in Wenyan) (Beijing, 1981), p. 7.
40. Zhang Shun-hui, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
41. Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
42. Yu Jia-xi, *op. cit.*, i, p. 256.
43. Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
44. The Xiang was located in the area of modern-day district of Xianhchengxian of the Henan Province. The estate was swallowed up by the kingdom of Chu in 643 BC, but it was later reconstituted in the form of bestowal to the Chu heir. From the name of this estate the name of Xiang takes its roots, one of representatives of which was, for instance, the prominent commander and politician Xiang Yu (項羽, 232—202 BC).
45. Yu Jia-xi, *op. cit.*, i, p. 256; Zhang Shun-hui, *op. cit.*, p. 200; Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
46. Sima Qian, *Istoricheskie zapiski* (“*Shi czi*”) (Historical Notes (“*Shi ji*”)), transl. by R. V. Viatkin, V. S. Taskin (Moscow, 1972—2002), iv, p. 191. Dawan is a Central Asian kingdom, the object of military expansion of the Emperor Wu of Han. It was located over six thousand kilometres from Han’s capital, the city of Changan. Was famous for its horses.
47. Quoted according to Wang Qi-zhou, “‘Han shu yi wen zhi’ zhuluzhi ‘Yu chu zhou shuo’ tanyi” (“漢書. 藝文志” 著錄之“虞初周說” 探佚, “The lost fragments of ‘Expressions of Yu Chu about Zhou’ which were discovered and entered in ‘The Treatise of Art and Literature’ of ‘The History of the Han [Dynasty]’”), *Nankai xuebao* III (2005), p. 41. It is known that under the Emperor Wu of Han yellow was officially established as the superior colour, and thus dignitaries and courtiers could wear yellow clothes in exceptional cases — for instance, in the course of state ceremonies (such as pilgrimage to Tai Shan) or with a special permission of the emperor. Apparently, Yu Chu was in favour of the Emperor Wu.
48. Lu Xiün, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue*, p. 29. This view is shared by Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 33, Yuan Xing-pei and Hou Zhong-yi (*op. cit.*, p. 8) and others. The mentioned passages are extracted from “*Tai ping yu lan*” (太平御覽, “The Imperial Review of the Tai-ping Years”), “*Shan hai jing*” (山海經, “The Book of Mountains and Seas”) and “*Wen xuan*” (文選, “Literary Collection”). Chen Zi-li (陳自力, b. 1953) believes that there are five — and not three — passages from “*Yu chu zhou shuo*” that came down to us (Chen Zi-li (陳自力), “‘Yu chu zhou shuo’ kaobian sanze” (“虞初周說” 考辨三則, “Three notes about the research of ‘Expressions of Yu Chu about Zhou’”), *Guangxi daxue xuebao* II (1988), pp. 69—70).
49. Wang Qi-zhou, “‘Han shu yi wen zhi’ zhuluzhi ‘Yu chu zhou shuo’ tanyi”, p. 41. Wang Qi-zhou also notes that it is unclear from the commentary of Ying Shao what exactly is implied by “The History of the Zhou [Dynasty]” (周書), since three texts known to us could be used in this capacity (pp. 42—5).
50. *Han fu jin yi* (漢賦今譯, Han Odes with Modern Translation), ed. by Zhang Qi-cheng, Xu Da (Guiyang, 2001), pp. 104—5.
51. Yu Jia-xi, *op. cit.*, i, p. 257.
52. Chen Zi-li, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
53. Lu Xiün, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue*, p. 29.
54. Wang Zhi-zhong, *op. cit.*, p. 33. See also: Yu Jia-xi, *op. cit.*, i, p. 257.

Illustrations:

Fig. 1. Great Chinese historiographer Ban Gu. Traditional presentation.