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The history of Chinese Grammars in Chinese and Western Scholarly Traditions

Alain Peyraube
CRLAO (CNRS & EHESS)
Paris, France

Traditions in Chinese linguistics

Reflections on language have a very long history in China. They go back as far as the Warring States Period (480-221 BC). Some important observations on the nature of language can be found in *Xunzi* 荀子(3rd century BC). Later on, in each period of the long Chinese history, very elaborated dictionaries, studies in phonology, dialectology or prosody (on rhymes) came into being.

Traditions in Chinese linguistics (2)

While China has a long tradition in the compilation of rhyme dictionaries, the study of rhetoric and literary style, and the critical interpretation of classical texts, and certainly in philology, a native tradition of grammar writing only began to develop at a relatively late period of its modern history

Mǎ Shì Wéntōng 馬氏文通

Only in 1898 that the first indigenous Chinese grammar, written by Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1845-1900) appeared (possibly co-written with his brother Ma Xiangbo 馬相伯 1840-1939). The *Mǎ Shì Wéntōng* 馬氏文通 [*Basic principles for writing clearly and coherently by Monsieur Ma*]

Describes Classical Chinese and not any vernacular form

First Spanish grammar

However, several earliest extant grammars of Chinese written by missionaries appear in the 17th century. The first one is the *Arte de la lengua Chiõ Chiu* [Grammar of the Chiõ Chiu language (漳州)?], composed in 1620-1621 (萬曆四十八年) by Melchior de Mançano (1580-1630?)

Surprisingly - it is not a grammar of early Modern Mandarin (the imperial language of the court) but a grammar of the Southern Min language

Work of Spanish missionaries

The Spanish missionaries, particularly the Dominicans and Franciscans, played a significant role in Chinese linguistic history

They were the first to record the grammar and lexicon of vernaculars (again predating any Chinese linguistic tradition) and the first to create romanization systems and promote the use of the demotic or specially created dialect characters. See van der Loon (1966, 1967)

A second major Spanish grammar

Deals for the first time with the prestige variety of Mandarin of this epoch, spoken in the former capital, Nanjing.

This southern style of Mandarin is described in the *Arte de la lengua mandarina* [Grammar of the Mandarin language] completed in 1682 by the Dominican Francisco Varo (1627-1687); published in 1703 in Canton (Guangzhou)

Other earliest extant grammars

Preceded by Martino Martini : *Grammatica Sinica* (1653) but a very brief description of Mandarin,

and then followed by descriptions made by gentleman travelers and scholars in Europe, some of whom visited or were able to live in China

Joseph Prémare: *Notitiae Linguae Sinicae* (1728/1831 Malacca)

Thomas (Theophilus) Bayer: *Museum sinicum* (1730 St Petesburg)

Other earliest extant grammars (2)

Joshua Marshman: *Clavis Sinica* (1814 Serampore)

Robert Morrison: *A grammar of the Chinese language* (1815 Serampore, West Bengal)

Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat: *Elémens de la grammaire chinoise* (1822 Paris)

Antoine Bazin: *Grammaire mandarine* (1856 Paris)

Stanislas Julien: *Syntaxe nouvelle de la langue chinoise* (1870 Paris)

Georg von der Gabelentz: *Chinesische Grammatik* (1881 Leipzig)

Lost grammars

⌘ There are reputedly even earlier grammars than both the 1620/1621 grammar of *Chiõ Chiu* Southern Min and Varo's 1682 Mandarin grammar, but for which, unfortunately, the manuscripts and their copies have disappeared from circulation, if have not been entirely lost.

Lost grammars (2)

⌘ We know of these only through serendipitous mentions in works on the history of the Spanish missions in the Philippines (Gonzales 1962)

⌘ The first lost manuscripts are reputedly the *Arte y vocabulario de la lengua China* by the Augustinian Martín de Rada (1533-1578) and a grammar of Mandarin, entitled *Arte de la lengua China* by Juan Cobo (ca. 1546-1592~1593), a Spanish missionary who arrived in the …

Lost grammars (3)

Philippines in 1588. Hence, these grammars would necessarily have been written prior to, if not well before 1592, predating by 40 years the 1620-1621 *Arte*. Nonetheless, none have, so far, been recovered, presuming copies still exist. A similar situation applies to still another grammar of Mandarin which is attributed to Francisco Díaz (1606-1646), written during the years 1640-1641 in …

Lost grammars (4)

Bataán (the Philippines), with the title *Gramática española-china* (Gonzales 1962: 639), while a third lost manuscript is the *Arte de la lengua mandarina*, purportedly composed in the year 1641 by Juan Bautista de Morales (1597-1664) (Gonzales 1962: 634)

Main aims of the talk
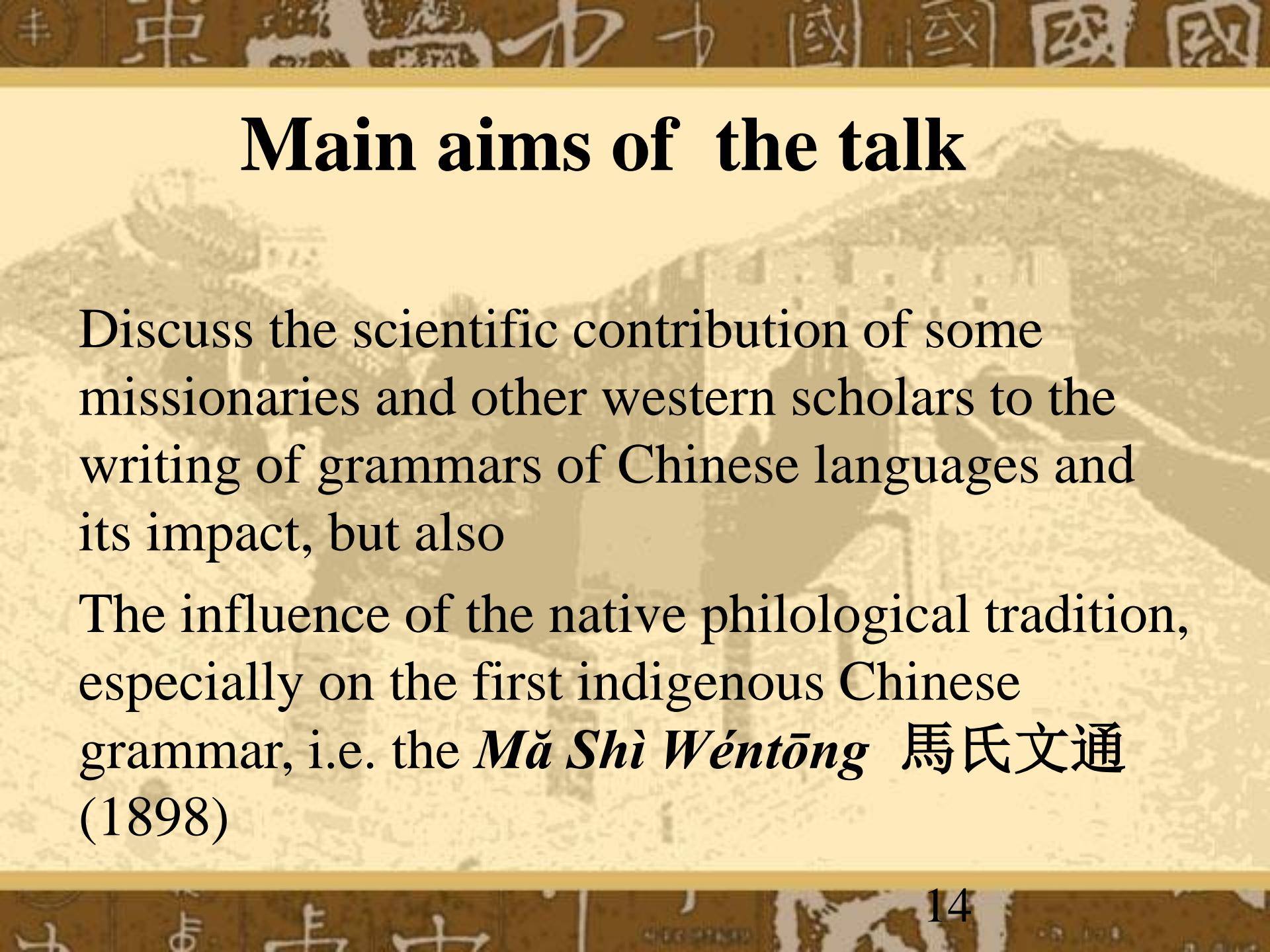
Discuss the scientific contribution of some missionaries and other western scholars to the writing of grammars of Chinese languages and its impact, but also

The influence of the native philological tradition, especially on the first indigenous Chinese grammar, i.e. the *Mǎ Shì Wéntōng* 馬氏文通 (1898)

Four works and two topics discussed

Melchior de Mançano *Arte de la lengua Chiõ Chiu* [Grammar of the Chiõ Chiu language] (1620-1621)

Francisco Varo *Arte de la lengua mandarina* [Grammar of the Mandarin language] (1682/1703)

Joseph Prémare *Notitiae Linguae Sinicae* (1728/1831 Malacca)

Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat: *Elémens de la grammaire chinoise* (1822)

Topics : Tense/Aspect, Classifiers (CLs)

Arte de la lengua Chiõ Chiu

Language spoken by small communities in the *Parian* outside the city walls of Manila

Most likely represents a koine of Southern Min dialects spoken in the south of Fujian in 16th-17th centuries (Chappell & Peyraube 2006, 2014; see also Klöter 2011 on Early Manila Hokkien and an excellent translation of the *Arte*)

Para el uso de N. Rev.do P.do Fr.co de la orden
de Pred.s

arte de la lengua chio chiu.

La lengua comun del Reino de china es la lengua
mandarina correspondiendo el uicino uenta prouincia de
chincheo do ay particular lengua todos los ques auian letra
entienden la lengua mandarina en la prouincia de chio
chiu ay particular lengua ques laque aqui se abla pero ase
de aduertir que en esta prouincia ay cinco lenguas algo difi=
rentes como lo son portuguesa ualencia no aragonesa cas
tellana etc.a la mas comun es la de chio chiu y laque mas a
qui se abla a la qual el arte y vocabulario iran en esta
lengua ques de aduertir que uno a cada puño de cada co=
mo quien ubiere de aprender lengua... le dana que en... uenita
puño de portugues español etc.

+ española mexo:
... aprender la
lengua toledan

Arte de la lengua mandarina

Arte de la lengua mandarina [Grammar of the Mandarin language] completed in 1682 by the Dominican scholar, Francisco Varo, while living in Funing 福宁 (Fujian province, China), published in 1703 in Canton. Represents first major grammar of the Mandarin language

See Coblin & Levi (2000) for an annotated comprehensive translation into English

Notitiae linguae sinicae

by father Joseph Prémare (1666-1735), a Jesuit. Written in Latin and covers both Classical Chinese and the vernacular. Different rules are given for the one and the other. Numerous examples - no less than 12,000 - are provided.

 The rhetorical nature of this grammar is important to note.

Model for these three grammars of Chinese

Famous Latin grammar of Elio Antonio de Nebrija (1444–1522), ***Introductiones Latinae*** (1481) and possibly the earliest grammar of a Romance language, ***Gramatica de la Lengua Castellana*** (1492) by the same scholar

Varo explicitly acknowledges Nebrija's grammatical framework in his prologue (page 1a, Coblin and Levi 2001: 5).

Greco–Latin model

Greco–Latin model - well-designed for highly inflectional languages

Not surprising to find these missionary grammars including chapters on:

- verb conjugations and tenses: pluperfect preterite, the future, the infinitive and the subjunctive;

- declension of nouns and pronouns, including features of case, gender and number.

Greco–Latin model (2)

-   the eight classical parts of speech of the Latin *ars grammatica* (see Breitenbach 2000: xxxii), i.e.:

 nouns, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, participles, adverbs, articles, conjunctions

Verb conjugations in *Arte*

- **guà lāy** 我來 **yo vengo** 'I come'
- **lu lāy** 汝來 **tu bienes** 'you (sg) come'
- **ý lāy** 伊來 **aquel biene** 'that one comes'
- **guàn lāy** 阮來 **nosotros benemos** 'we come'
- **lǔn lāy** 恁來 **vosotro benis** 'you (pl) come'
- **ín lāy** 因來 **aquellos bienen** 'those ones come'

Spanish Romanization and Chiõ Chiu characters taken from the ms of the *Arte*

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Varo's grammar

The same situation obtains in Varo's grammar for conjugating the verb *gái* 愛 'to love' [contemporary Mandarin *ài*] in the Nanjing-based Mandarin koine of the late 17th century

Examples: 我愛 *gò gái* 'I love', 你愛 *nì gái* 'you love', 他愛 *t'ā gái* 'that one loves', 我們愛 *gò mên gái* 'we love', 你們愛 *nì mên gái* 'ye love', 他們愛 *t'ā mên gái* 'those ones love' (Coblin & Levi 2000: 117)

Varo's grammar (2)

Nonetheless, when giving a detailed seven-page description of how to render the different Spanish tenses, moods and voices into Mandarin (pp. 51-58), Varo remarks upon the use of time adverbs to confine the verb to a particular time and the use of particles with tenses other than the present, generally called aspect markers

Élémens de la grammaire chinoise

Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat's *Élémens de la grammaire chinoise ou principes généraux de Kou-wen ou style antique et du Kouan-hoa* (1822) might be considered as an exception: It sets out to explain Chinese grammar on its own terms and according to its own categories

Élémens de la grammaire chinoise

Strongly influenced by the *Notitiae Linguae Sinicae* from Father Joseph Prémare (1728/1831 Malacca) , his grammar is nevertheless the first attempt at a logical synthesis that does not try to impose the traditional framework of the European grammars, having no hesitation in stating that Chinese nouns are not marked for gender or case, nor are there any verb conjugations. (Peyraube 2014)

Classifiers

Let's now consider a category which is not to be found in any Greco-Latin grammatical model: the classifiers (CL), words which are syntactically required in Chinese in the operation of quantifying a noun between a numeral or other quantifiers and the head noun: Dem/Num – CL – Noun (N)

Arte de la lengua chiõ-chiu (1)

- In the Barcelona copy, but not in the British Library manuscript copy, there is an appendix which lists 80 classifiers, called ***numerales propios***

- All use the format : 四 *sy* 'four' – CL – N

  A selection of nouns is provided for each classifier but there is little explanation of their syntax given

Arte de la lengua chiõ-chiu (2)

« *In this language, apart from the common numerals, there are also other special numerals for counting particular items. These are placed between the common numeral and the noun; for example: 'one snake' is called* **cheg bue choa** »

(**cik^8 bue^2 cua^{5}一尾蛇**)

one – CL – snake

Arte Classifiers (1)

1. 尾 *bue2*
2. 坎 *kham2*
3. 垃 *khu1*
4. 句 *ku3*
5. 綑 *khun2*
6. 群 *kun5*
7. 載 *cai7*
8. 站 *cam2*
9. 郎 *cat4*

10. 層 *can5*
11. 欉 *cang5*
12. 隻 *ciah4*
13. 升 *cin1*
14. 􏰀 *cue7*
15. 串 *chuinn2*
16. 口 *chiu3*
17. 付 *hu3*
18. 箇 *ge2*

Arte **Classifiers (2)**

19. 下 *ee3*
20. 枝 *ki1*
21. 條 *tiau5*
22. 件 *kiann2*
23. 斤 *kin1*
24. 莖 *king1*
25. 錦 *gim*

26. 扐 *liah8*
27. 粒 *liap8*
28. 𥴊 *lui2*
29. 漏 *lau7*
30. 門 *mui5*
31. 領 *nia2*
32. 帙 *iah4*
33. *etc.*

Varo's 1703 grammar - Mandarin

In Varo's grammar, classifiers turn up in the second paragraph of Chapter XII: « On the numbers and numerals » (Coblin & Levi 2000: 159)

Similarly to S. Min *Arte*, Varo calls this speech category *numerales* and more specifically states that '*the numerals are mainly rendered by the particle kó 個 (个) postposed immediately to the number', unless that which is being counted has their own particula propia*'

Varo's 1703 grammar (2)

such as *puèn* 本 for books and volumes.

Varo goes on to list 52 examples of these numerales 'enumerators' (page 73).

pǎ chě ch'uên 八隻船　　'eight boats'

iě tìng máo 一頂帽　　　'one cap'

leàng chī chǒ 兩枝燭　'two candles'

iě k'ò mì 一顆米　　　'one grain of rice'

19th century grammars

Abel-Rémusat (1822/1857) discusses the classifier under the name of *numérale* (page 50-51) or *numérale spéciale* (p.113).

« Presque toujours on ajoute aux noms des nombres une particule qui ne change rien au sens, quoiqu'elle varie suivant la nature des objets nombrés. On nomme ces sortes de particules, numérales. »

Abel-Rémusat 1822/1857

« Les mots employés en ce sens perdent tout-à-fait la signification qu'ils auraient isolément, et l'on en est averti par la présence du nom de nombre. »

He also notes that *kó* is a common *numérale* used for both persons & things; expression of the indefinite article with *ì + kó: ì kó jîn* 一個人 *« un homme »*

Abel-Rémusat refers the reader to a complete list of CLs in a dictionary by P. Basile (p. 50, footnote 1).

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Classifiers (2)

One is struck by the uniform treatment in the three grammars in question of this grammatical category which does not exist in European languages.

-It is labelled everywhere *numérales* or *particules numérales*

-In the end, these grammars do not go further than to provide lists without further explanation.

Conclusion (1)   Mismatch: framework & target language

Early phase of grammar writing by Europeans for Chinese languages: little influence of language type on the design of grammars for Chinese languages

Application of European morphological categories to analytic Chinese languages, but

Some minor adjustments made for categories not present in the major European languages: e.g. for classifiers but not for aspect versus tense

Mǎ Shì Wéntōng 馬氏文通

Let's now come back to the first native Chinese grammar written by Ma Jianzhong (1845-1900): the *Mǎ Shì Wéntōng* 馬氏文通 [*Basic principles for writing clearly and coherently by Monsieur Ma*] that describes Classical Chinese and not any vernacular form. Published in 1898

Mǎ Shì Wéntōng 馬氏文通 (2)

Unlike the missionary grammars, it is not inspired by the grammars of Nebrija nor consequently based directly on any Greco-Latin model

Ma Jianzhong was inspired by both Prémare's *Notitiae Linguae Sinicae* (1728, published 1831) and by the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* (1660) of Arnauld & Lancelot (see Peyraube1999, 2001)

Evidence comes from method of analysis and comparison of parts of speech described

Main Western Source

✇ This grammar, although relying heavily on Chinese traditions is clearly designed like a Western grammar. It has been written taking as a model equivalent works on Indo-European languages.

✇ I will try to show that the *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* (better known under the name of *Grammaire de Port-Royal*) dating from 1660 has inspired the *Ma Shi wen tong* to a considerable extent.

Main Western Source (2)

Second Preface (Translation by Victor Mair):

"When I compare texts in these languages [Western languages], I observe that their words are of different categories and that they are governed by sentences. There are fixed rules for enunciating what is in the mind and for forming one's thoughts.

Main Western Source (3)

From this, I reasoned that the chief principles regulating our classics, histories, philosophers, and miscellaneous writings would be the same. Consequently, I applied these common factors to create a similar set of rules for Chinese. That is how this book came into being".

Main Western Source (4)

Ma Jianzhong called his book a Grammar: "[this book would be called a *gelangma* 葛郎玛 [term used to render the word 'grammar' or 'grammaire'] … Each country has its own grammar, the general drift of which resembles the grammars of other countries."

Main Western Source (5)

Then, Ma stated explicitly: "This book was written in imitation of Western grammar" (*ci shu xi fang gelangma er zuo* 此书系仿 葛郎玛而作)

My interpretation: « … in imitation of A WESTERN GRAMMAR »

Which 'Western Grammar' ? The *Grammaire de Port-Royal* (1660).

Main Western Source (6)

I would like to put forward the following hypothesis: among all the grammars that Ma Jianzhong could have had at his disposition, it is likely that the *Grammaire de Port Royal* exerted the largest influence on him, as it had influenced the vast majority of Western linguists until the nineteenth century, before the theories of comparative grammar (比较语法) gained ground in the West.

Main Western Source (7)

Six editions of the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* between 1803 and 1846 in Paris, where it was known as 'la Grammaire' [*THE grammar*].

My hypothesis is based on the fact that the philosophical systems of the two grammars are quite similar, as Chen Guohua (1997) already noticed.

Main Western Source (8)

Moreover, comparing the terms used in the two books for the parts of speech (categories), the syntactic functions and the positions (or cases), shows that there are a lot of similarities at this level. These similarities could hardly have come about by mere chance.

Chinese sources

However, *Mǎ Shì Wéntōng* 馬氏文通 also draws upon Chinese philological traditions: in particular Ma's grammar refers to four Qing dynasty scholars who compiled books on stylistics and rhetoric, describing and classifying rhetorical particles with some scattered but non-systematic references to grammar. See Peyraube & Chappell (Forthcoming)

Chinese sources (2)

- *Wén zé* 文则 by Chen Kui 陈骙 (*Rules for literary composition*) – 1170
- *Yǔ zhù* 语助 by Lu Yiwei 卢以纬 (*Grammatical particles*) – 1311
- The *Wén Zé* (1170) and the *Yǔ Zhù* (1311) represent some reflections on grammar that can be characterized as works concerning rhetoric or stylistics.

Chinese sources (3)

1. *Xū zì shuō* 虛字説 by Yuan Renlin 袁仁林 (1710) *On empty words* [stylistic/rhetorical trad.]

2. *Zhùzì biànlüè* 助字 辨略 by Liu Qi 劉淇 (1711) *Distinguishing auxiliary words* [philological trad.]

3. *Jīngzhuàn shìcí* 經傳釋詞 by Wang Yinzhi 王引之 (1798) *Book of particles* [philological trad.]

4. *Gǔshū yíyì jǔlì* 古書疑義舉例 (n.d.) by Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821-1906) *Examples of disputable problems from the classics* [philological trad.]

Example of plagiarism ?

Below is a case of what will be called today a plagiarism showing that:

Ma Jianzhong profited from the work of Yuan Renlin

A passage from *Xū zì shuō (XZS)* recopied almost *ad verbatim* in the *Mǎ Shì Wéntōng (MSWT)* is:

(More examples in Beiluobei 贝罗贝 2001)

虚字説：　袁仁林 (1710)

XZS, p. 117: '(則) 字 (即) 字，　乃直承顺接之
辭, 猶俗云 (就)也，　與上影响相随，　口吻甚
緊 *zé » zì «jí» zì, năi zhíchéng shùnjiē zhi cí,
yóu sú yún «jiù» yě, yǔ shàng yǐngxiǎng
xiāngsuí, kǒuwěn shèn jǐn.*

'The characters *zé* and *jí* are words with the function of
smooth coordination, and are similar to the vernacular
jiù, in following the preceding context; the tone
resembles it very closely'

Mǎ Shì Wéntōng 馬氏文通

MSWT, p. 495: '(则) 字乃直承顺接之辭，與上文影响相随，口吻甚緊 *(zé) zì nǎi zhíchéng shùnjiē zhi cí, yǔ shàngwén yǐngxiǎng xiāngsuí, kǒuwěn shèn jǐn.*

'The character *zé* is a word with the function of smooth coordination, in following the preceding context; the tone resembles it very closely'

Conclusion (2)

The first native Chinese grammar, the *Mǎ Shì Wéntōng* 馬氏文通 (1898) describes Classical Chinese and not any vernacular form.

Although it is always considered as a Western style Chinese grammar, obviously inspired by the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* (1660),

it also draws upon Chinese philological traditions which have a history spanning several centuries.

Conclusion (4)

Ma Jianzhong, a genius of a synthesizer, had only to draw upon this fund of traditional grammatical knowledge, explore it in more detail and re-arrange it, using the framework of a western grammar: the *grammaire raisonnée*; i.e. a model of UG (Universal Grammar) that has inspired N. Chomsky.

Merci
Thank you
谢谢

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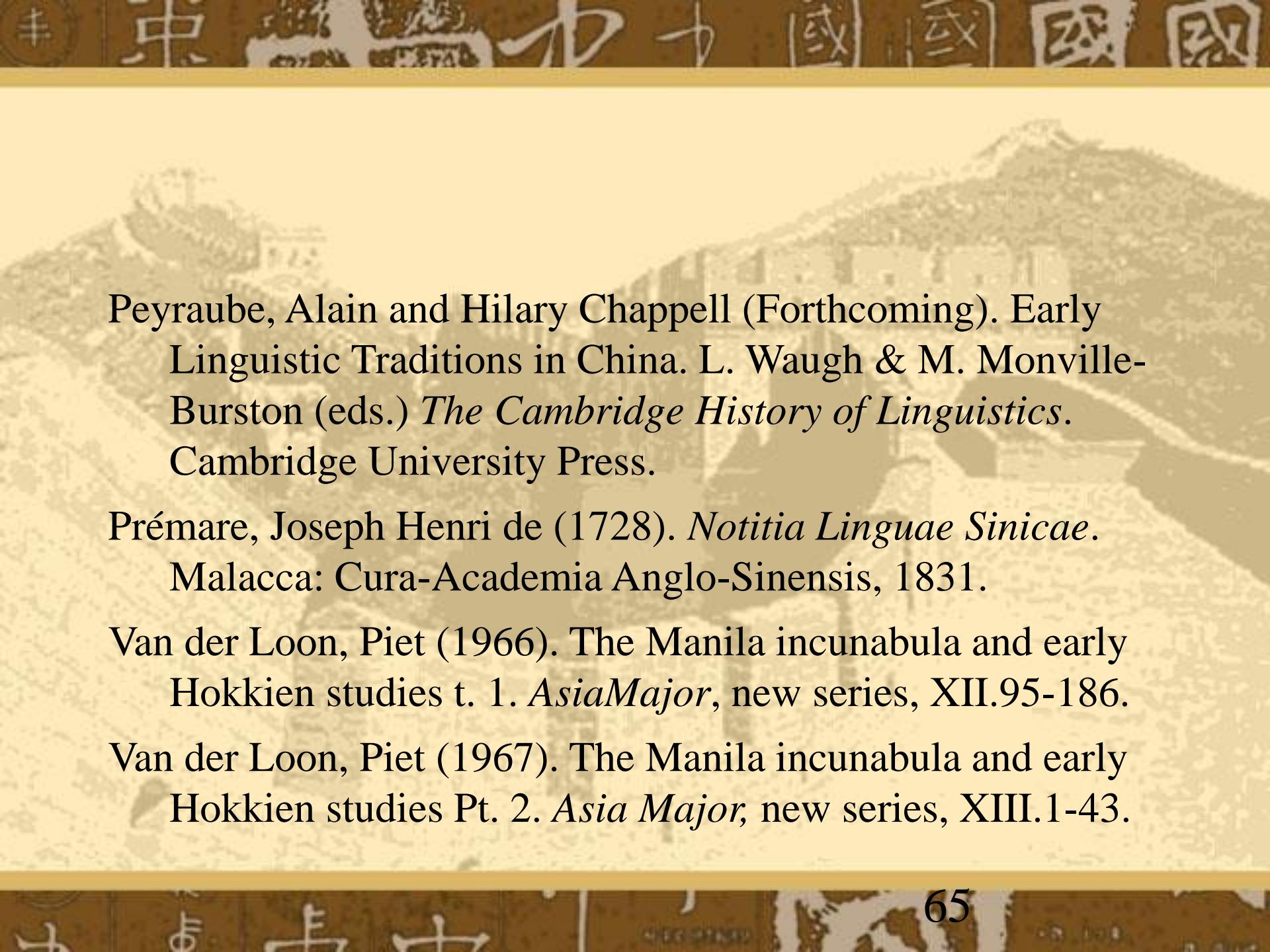
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