

1 RHETORIC IN ANCIENT CHINA

In this chapter we provide a brief overview of rhetoric in ancient China. The chronology of Ancient Chinese dynasties and periods is (Lu X.):¹

21-16 centuries BCE: The Xia Dynasty (a legendary dynasty about which little is known)

16 –11 centuries BCE: The Shang Dynasty (aka Yin)

1027-770 BCE: The Zhou Dynasty (which Confucius looks back on as the golden age)

722-481 BCE: The Spring and Autumn Period (Chun Qiu)

475-221 BCE: The Warring States Period (Zhan Guo)

Rhetoric is most commonly perceived as “the art of persuasion, the artistic use of oral and written expressions, for the purpose of changing thought and action at social, political and individual levels” (Lu, X., *Ancient China 2*). However, the notion of rhetoric has many different meanings within the Chinese tradition, as it does within the Western one, some of which are reviewed in Chapter 8. Chinese rhetoric has enjoyed an extremely long history, but did not enjoy the status of a distinct discipline until the early twentieth century (Harbsmeier 115–16). Thus “rhetoric” has been known under a variety of different terms. The ancient Chinese (up to 221 BCE) had a well-developed sense of rhetoric but

called various branches of it by different names. Lu (5) provides the meanings of key Chinese rhetorical terms as used in classical Chinese texts.

Yan (言)	speech, talks and the use of language
Ci (辞)	modes of speech, types of discourse, eloquence, style
Jian (谏)	giving advice, persuasion
Shui/shuo (说)	persuasion/ explanation, idea, thought
Ming (名)	naming, symbol using, rationality, epistemology
Bian (辩)	distinction change, justice-eloquence, arguments, persuasion, debate, disputation discussion

So persuasion was known as *shui* (说), explanation *ming* (名), and argumentation *bian* (辩). Although there is overlap between these terms (and others), Lu argues that each word has a particular function in conceptualising and contextualising persuasive discourse. For example *shui* is associated with face-to-face persuasion and *ming* deals with the use of symbols in social and epistemological contexts. Lu suggests that the term *ming bian xue* (名辩学) is comparable to the Western study of rhetoric, with *ming* aiming to seek truth and justice and *bian* concerning the art of persuasion. This term also captures the contradiction inherent in the two key concepts of Western rhetoric, namely viz truth and/or persuasion.

A common misunderstanding is that Chinese rhetorical perspectives were monolithic. This was not the case. In ancient China, the Ming school whose best-known protagonist was perhaps Gong-sun Long (325-250 BCE), was concerned with probability, relativism and classification under the general umbrella of epistemology and social justice. Confucian concerns included issues of morality and the moral impact of speech and moral character of the speaker on ethical behaviour and social order. Mohism (480-250 BCE) was concerned with developing a rational system of argumentation (Angus Graham). The concerns of Daoism (cf. Zhuangzi 369-286 BCE) included “antirational and transcendental mode of philosophical and rhetorical enquiry” (Lu X., “*Ancient China*” 7). Legalism, founded by the philosopher Han Feizi (280-233 BCE),

was concerned with the use of language and persuasion to strengthen centralised political power.

Rhetorical devices employed included metaphorical, anecdotal, analogical, paradoxical, chain reasoning, classification, and inference. In this context it is important to point out the fallacy believed and promulgated by many Western scholars of Chinese thought, of which Alfred Bloom's work provides perhaps the most striking example, that the structure of the Chinese language somehow impedes the Chinese from thinking and arguing in what Western scholars call a rational way. A major and long-standing controversy concerns the extent to which Chinese provides evidence for the strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, namely that language determines thought. Many scholars have argued that it does, but we side more with Robert Wardy's view that "we must resist any initial inclination to discern limits to Chinese thought imposed by the Chinese language" (8) and provide evidence for this position throughout the book. This is not to say, of course, that language, thought and culture are not associated, only that one does not necessarily determine the other.

A second misunderstanding—something Lu terms a "myth"—is that speech in Ancient China was not appreciated. In fact, speech was highly valued and encouraged. Argumentation and debates were common among philosophers and disputers (*bian shi* 辯士 and *bing jia* 名家). Indeed Liu Yameng ("To Capture the Essence of Chinese Rhetoric") goes as far as to claim an oral primacy and oratorical basis to Chinese rhetoric. Perhaps this goes too far, but Confucius certainly taught his disciples to practice *xin yan* (信言, trustworthy speech). It was *qiao yan* (巧言, clever speech) that he disliked. Liu argues that Confucius' denunciation of clever speech shows that he was worried about certain people's abilities in argument. Such a person might well have been Mao Hiao-cheng, whom Confucius ordered executed during his brief spell as Minister of Justice because he could argue a right to be a wrong and a wrong to be a right. "What is deprecated by ancient Chinese philosophers is not speech in general but rather glib speakers or speakers with flowery and empty words" (Lu X. 31). This distaste is almost exactly mirrored by Aristotle and Plato's distaste for the Greek sophists.

As Anglo-American rhetoric owes much to its classical Greek and Latin forebears, we here briefly consider the different emphases placed on speaking and writing in Greek and Chinese rhetoric respectively. As is well known, Sicily was the birth place of classical Greek rhetoric. After the expulsion of the tyrants in 467 BCE, a number of civil law suits were brought by citizens. Many were eager to reclaim property that had been, as it were, "tyrannised" and a system for pleading these suits was developed by Corax, who wrote the first books on rhetoric, defining rhetoric as "the artificer of persuasion." Corax divided the

plea, or speech, into either three parts, namely: the exordium; the arguments, both constructive and refutative; and the epilogue; or into five parts, namely: the exordium; the narrative; the arguments; the subsidiary arguments; and the epilogue. Although the speeches were written, they were written to be read aloud. The forensic nature of this rhetoric is of great importance as it presupposes two parties—the antagonist and the protagonist—who are trying to persuade a third party—usually some form of judge—of the justice of their particular case. Each case had its own facts and these facts could be shown or proved, although this is not to say this is what always happened. This forensic rhetoric was practiced under an adversarial legal system and practiced by people who were, to a large extent, political equals. This contrasts strongly with the Chinese legal system which was inquisitorial and hierarchical.

A further point of contrast between early Chinese and Greek rhetoric was that the ability to speak well and persuasively in public was essential to the ambitious Athenian of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. People were expected to participate in politics.

In contrast, public speaking of this sort has had little place in Chinese political life. The conventional wisdom is of “agonistic Greeks and irenic Chinese” (Durrant 283). And while the force of Durrant’s argument here is that the Chinese were able, on occasion, to be harshly critical, it is nevertheless true that criticism of their predecessors was a characteristic feature of Greek historiography, while Confucius is “repeatedly and respectfully cited to buttress the authority of the text” (284), in much the same way as Kirkpatrick was required to use quotations from Mao to buttress the authority of his thesis, referred to in the introduction. However, Durrant’s argument is worth noting. Chinese can be antagonistic—and Durrant gives the examples of Yang Xiong 扬雄 (53-18 BCE), Wang Chong 王充 (27-110 CE) and Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE) as criticising the great historian Sima Qian (circa 145-90 BCE). Wang Chong, for example criticised him thus: “nevertheless he relied on what had already been completed and made a record of former events, and he did not produce anything from within himself [然而因成纪前, 无脑中之造]” (285). We return to Wang Chong in Chapter 2.

While Liu’s (“To Capture the Essence of Chinese Rhetoric:”) claims for an oral primacy and oratorical basis to Chinese rhetoric probably go too far, there have been periods in Chinese history when oral persuasion has been prevalent, most notably during the period of the Warring States (475-221 BCE) (Graham, *The Disputers of the Dao*). This was a time when central control collapsed and China comprised several competing fiefdoms when “kings and lords recruited learned individuals to form advisory boards” (You, “Building Empire” 368). These were the *bian shi* or *you shi* (游士), court counselors, and this is the

period, when, in François Jullien's view, comparisons with Greece can be made. It was a time of "great collective and personal freedom" (124). But, again as Jullien points out, with the establishment of the unified empire in 221 BCE, the role of the *you shi* declined and the man of letters became "a cog in the machine" and "his independence of thought was subjected to the autocrats' often high-handed censorship."

The Confucian legacy was not sealed until several centuries after his death during the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE-9 CE) under Emperor Wu (r. 141-87 BCE). This was cemented by Emperor Wu's acceptance of the advice of one of his senior ministers, Dong Zhongshu, to establish an academy at which only Confucianism would be studied, other schools of thought being dismissed. This is of utmost importance, as this led to Confucianism becoming *the* state-sanctioned ideology. It became codified and from here stems its regulatory role. So, the Western Han "laid a cornerstone for the state-sanctioned argumentative tradition" (You, "Building Empire"). It might be more accurate, however, to say that there was now a state-sanctioned *canon*, rather than a state sanctioned *argumentative tradition*.

A famous debate, the Discourse on Salt and Iron (*yan tie lun*) took place during the Western Han. Court officials, many of whom were heavily influenced by legalism—to which we return later—argued with the Confucian literati over the imposition of taxes on salt and iron. The Confucian literati represented the landlord and merchant classes and they were successful in so far as the tax was lifted in various parts of the empire. The following excerpt exemplifies a typical "Confucian" argument and rhetorical structure. The use of analogy and historical precedent is evident.

The Literati (The well-educated): Confucius observed that the ruler of a kingdom or the chief of a house is not concerned about his people being few, but about lack of equitable treatment; nor is he concerned about poverty, but over the presence of discontentment. **Thus** the Son of Heaven should not speak about much and little, the feudal lords should not talk about advantage and detriment, ministers about gain and loss, but they should cultivate benevolence and righteousness, to set an example to the people, and extend wide their virtuous conduct to gain the people's confidence. Then will nearby folk lovingly flock to them and distant peoples submit to their authority. **Therefore**, the master conqueror does not fight, the expert warrior needs no soldiers; the truly great commander requires not to set his troops in battle array. Cultivate virtue in

the temple and the hall, then you need only show a bold front to the enemy and your troops will return home in victory. The Prince who practices benevolent administration should be matchless in the world; for him what use is expenditure. (Gale 4–5, emphasis added)

Note how the rhetorical structure of the argument in this example of reasoning by historical precedent lends itself to what Kirkpatrick has called a “because-therefore” or “frame-main” sequence (“Information Sequencing in Modern Standard Chinese”, “Are they really so Different?”, “Traditional Chinese Text Structures”). It can be represented as (where “Ø because” indicates that there is no explicit “because” marker in the original Chinese):

Ø BECAUSE (Confucius-discontentment) — THUS (Son
of Heaven-benevolence)

+

Ø BECAUSE (Son of Heaven benevolent) — THUS (people
support)

+

THUS
(do not fight but cultivate virtue)

We return to the principles of rhetorical and argument sequence later, but this example serves to illustrate a standard form of rhetorical sequence in traditional Chinese, where the justification for an argument or position typically precedes it.

The Chinese respect for their predecessors and early texts and classics means that commentators over centuries have constantly referred to the same texts. We therefore provide some background to the classics and the times they are describing. The Zhou dynasty (1027-770 BCE) represented the Confucian ideal in that Confucius felt that the Zhou represented a time of harmony, where each person knew his place. King Wen was the founder, followed by his son King Wu. *De* (德, virtue) became the ultimate criterion for evaluating royal behaviour, while *li* (礼, rites) became important political and ideological means of control. The Zhou “is considered as a watershed for the production of written texts” (Lu X. *Ancient China* 56) We get the *Shi Jing* (The Book of Poetry), the *Shang Shu* (The Shang Histories, also known as the Book of Lord Shang, and which includes the Zhou History as well as that of the earlier Shang dynasty), the *Yi*

Jing (The Book of Changes, described as “the ultimate origin of writing and the fundamental treatment of the powers of visual signs” (Lewis 239)). The *Zhou Li* (Rites of Zhou), which offers detailed rules and norms for speech and behaviour in social, official and family life, was also probably written at this time. As will be illustrated below, the writing of the *Zhou Li* could be very straightforward and earthy. Two kinds of speeches were recorded in the *Shang Shu*, the “*shi*” (誓), taking oath and the *gao* (诰), public advising. A *shi* was performed by a ruler before a war to encourage morale, and is a type of deliberative rhetoric. A *gao* was performed by the king at mass gatherings such as the celebration of a harvest and is a type of epideictic rhetoric, and which could also be offered by ministers to the king in order to inspire him to follow the examples of Wen and Wu, the wise, benevolent and virtuous founders of the dynasty.

In 770 BCE the Zhou were defeated by the so-called barbarians (i.e., those tribes not assimilated to Zhou culture) and we move to China’s most chaotic and stimulating time with the rise of vassal states and competing schools of thought. The social and economic changes paved the way for social and cultural transformation. Changes began with the education system. Private institutions flourished and opened their doors to rich and poor alike. Rather than teaching by rote, “a master taught his disciples his own concepts about various subjects” (Lu X., *Ancient China* 63). Students could dispute with their masters and this critical thinking in education produced profound changes in cultural values, social stratification and interpersonal relations. A scholarly tradition or school was perpetuated across time through the production of texts, composed of bundles of bamboo or wooden strips. Authority was located in quotation and “since the Masters preserved or invented within the texts offered doctrines for creating and maintaining social order, the initial relation of the schools to the state was one of opposition” (Lewis 95).

It was believed that able and virtuous people should be employed ahead of relatives of the ruler. This is the beginning of meritocracy and the emergence of *shi* (士), the educated intellectual elite. Freedom of speech and argument became commonplace and persuasion and argumentation were popular rhetorical activities. The period was characterised by free expression, critical thinking and intellectual vigour. This is the time of the original “One Hundred Schools of Thought,” and was the golden age for the production of written materials, as each school claimed a universal way. This is why Jullien identifies this period as the period with which comparison between China and Greece is possible. This led to the appearance of canons (*jing*), which were regularly paired with an explanation and a commentary (*zhuan*) which Lewis explains “articulated the significance of the master text.” Lewis proceeds, “A permanent truth was attributed to the old texts with their archaic language, while the commentaries

were used to successively apply this truth to changing social problems and evolving philosophical debates” (333). This time also saw the production of the historical texts such as the *Guo Yu* (Discourse of the States), and the *Zhan Guo Ce* (Intrigues of the Warring States). We also get the philosophical works such as the Confucian Analects, the *Dao De Jing* of Laozi, and books by Mencius, Mozi, Zhuangzi, Xunzi and Han Feizi. This is also the time of the *Zuo Zhuan* which uses historical chronicles to expound political theories and defines these theories through the dictates of ritual. It contains extensive narratives that demonstrate moral lessons and these narratives are interspersed with participants’ speeches that discuss proper conduct. Judgements on individuals or events are supplied by a third person, usually Confucius.

The Book of Rites (*Li Ji*) describes the proper conduct—including ways of speaking—in maintaining the five key Confucian relationships. These relationships are those between: prince and minister; father and son; husband and wife; elder and younger; friends. All but the relationship between friends are hierarchical, with the second member of each pair being seen in some way as of inferior status to the first. The keeping of these relationships was considered essential for an orderly society and it is not hard to see how any use of rhetoric to destabilise the status quo was viewed negatively. This can be summed up in a quote from Confucius “Few who are filial and fraternal would want to offend their superiors; and when they do not like to offend their superiors, none would be fond of stirring up social order” (Wang G. 13). Indeed the *Li Ji* requires execution for those “who split words so as to break the force of the laws” and “who confound names so as to change what has been definitely settled” (*The Li Ki* 1). It is this type of attitude and its inevitable encouragement of indirect style (or complete silence) that has led Jullien to ask “In the name of what, therefore, can the Chinese man of letters break free from the forces of power, affirm his positions, and thus speak openly? This is a question that is still being asked in China, one that makes dissidence more difficult” (379). “With such obliquity, dissidence is impossible” (137). We return to this theme in Chapter 9.

An important figure in the history of rhetoric and persuasion who lived sometime during this period (481-221 BCE), and was thus more or less contemporaneous with Aristotle, was the philosopher Gui Guzi, whose name means The Ghost of the Valleys. As might be surmised, people who tried to persuade the emperor—the *bian shi* and the *you shi*, for example—had to be careful. As a philosopher of the Warring States period, Gui Guzi clearly understood the importance of the relative power of the speaker and listener in such persuasion. As we have seen, the unity enjoyed under Zhou federalism had collapsed, replaced by several competing fiefdoms. This period saw constant and chaotic political alignments and realignments as states ought to enhance

their own positions while, increasingly, attempting to counteract the growing threat of the Qin, the state which eventually emerged triumphant in 221 BCE.

The travelling philosophers represented different schools. Gui Guzi is considered the founder of the Zong Heng (纵横) school. The attitude towards these philosophers has been ambivalent and recalls the common attitude to the sophists of Greece. For example, a well-known philosopher of the Zong Heng school, Hui Shi, was considered by his contemporaries to be only interested in confounding the arguments of others and not in projecting his own ideas. There are some remarkable similarities between some of Hui Shi's sayings and those of Zeno. Readers will be familiar with Zeno's paradox of the arrow which stated,

When the arrow is in a place exactly its own size it is at rest

In flight the arrow is always in a place exactly its own size

An arrow in flight is therefore at rest.

Hui Shi says "There is a time when a swiftly flying arrow is neither moving nor at rest" along with other contradictory aphorisms such as "The sun at noon is the sun declining" and "A creature born is a creature dying" (Forke 2). The ambivalence towards such philosophers was caused by an admiration for their persuasive skills coupled with a distrust of their motives. The Confucian philosopher, Xunzi described Gui Guzi's disciples as "ingratiating courtiers" who were "inadequate in uniting people domestically, inadequate in confronting enemies externally, unable to win the affinity of the people nor the trust of the nobles. But they were good at crafty persuasion and good at courting favour from the high ranks" (Tsao 19). The "courtiers" in question were Su Qin and Chang Yi and both appear in the *Zhan Guo Ce* (*The Intrigues of the States*), a volume which has been described by some scholars as a "manual of examples for rhetorical training" (Owen, *The End of the Chinese "Middle Ages"* 124). Rather than being faithful transcriptions of real debates, it comprises idealised accounts written after the events. James Crump even compares it with the Greek "suasoriae" by which students were given legends or historical facts as material on which to practice their debating skills.

To turn to Gui Guzi himself, it is far more likely that his eponymous book—a custom of the times—was compiled by his disciples rather than written by Gui Guzi himself. He was clearly influenced by *yin-yang* duality and considered that persuasion from below (*yin*) to above (*yang*) to be a disturbance of the natural order of things. Persuasion from below to above or from an inferior to a superior was *yin* and required special effort. Persuading from above to below,

from Emperor to subject, required less effort. “Yang (persuading from above to below) encourages straightforward speaking, Yin (persuading from below to above) encourages speaking in forked tongue” (Tsao 103).

As examples of “straightforward” speaking, I provide two imperial edicts. These are characterised by the use of imperatives and modals of obligation. The first one clearly shows the emperor’s irritation at philosophers such as Gui Guzi (see Kirkpatrick, “China’s First Systematic Account”).

The edict appointing Long as official in charge of the use of words.

Long! I am very fed up with the bad speech of expert speakers. They are people who confound good with evil and right with wrong and the rumours they spread frequently shock our people. I order you to take the position of official in charge of language. Whether representing the decrees I issue or reporting to me the ideas of officials and subjects, you must at all times ensure truth and accuracy.

The edict appointing Feng Kangshu as Duke of Wei.

The King said: Feng! You need to be careful! Don’t do things that cause people to hold grudges, do not use incorrect methods or unfair laws in such a way that you conceal your honest heart. You should model yourself on the sensitive conduct of earlier sages to settle your thoughts. You should frequently ask yourself whether your words and deeds are appropriate, and establish far-reaching policies to govern the country. You need to promulgate magnanimous policies, to make the lives of the people peaceful and secure, and then they will not eliminate you because of your faults. The King said: Ai! I remind you, young Feng, the mandate of heaven is immutable and you need to observe it in earnest! Do not sever our ancestral sacrificial rites through your mistakes. To manage the people well, you must be clear about your role and responsibilities, listen to my advice and instructions, and follow the way the previous emperor pacified the people.

Examples of less straightforward “from below-to-above persuasion” are provided later.

The effect of the relative status and power of speaker and audience has been made, rather more recently, by Lasswell:

When non-democratic attitudes prevail in a community, initiatives from below are phrased in somewhat laboured language. Elaborate words and gestures are used by a subordinate to show that he is not presuming to transgress the prerogatives of his superior. By contrast with the self-assurance of the superior, he represents himself as somewhat uncertain of judgement. (Laswell and Leites 30–1)

It can be argued that the relative status of participants has a fundamental effect on rhetorical style and persuasive strategy, no matter in which culture the interaction is taking place. And, when the emperor had ultimate power over the persuader, the persuader had to be resourceful. Gui Guzi understood that the persuader needed to know how he related to the audience. “Information of the audience and the situation is essential to persuasion” (Tsao 140). The ideal persuader requires several further key qualities: he is quick and perceptive; he is in control of himself and the situation; he is resourceful; he can assess people well; he can look after himself; and he can shepherd people. Gui Guzi also acknowledges the opportunistic and exploitative function of persuasion. “Speaking is like fishing. If the bait, language, is appropriate to the situation, then the human fish can be caught” (128). Silence and secrecy are considered valuable tactics. “If I keep silent so that he will open up, I may thus gain the advantage,” and “When I want to persuade, I must conceal my calculation” (65).

The *Gui Guzi* resembles a tactical manual, listing a variety of means of bettering one’s opponent. This, in turn, recalls Jullien’s argument that Chinese rhetorical style is directly influenced by Chinese military strategy, a fundamental principle of which was to avoid direct confrontation. Indeed the art of war “taught how to triumph by avoiding battle altogether” (Jullien, *Detour and Access* 40). This principle of “avoidance” was later observed by Mao whose advice to “make noise in the east to attack in the west,” Jullien describes as a summary of the whole of Chinese military strategy. Jullien goes on to argue that, in direct contrast, Greek military strategy sought face-to-face confrontation, an “agonistic” arrangement, as this was the most effective and efficient way of settling military (and thus civil) disputes.

This is an interesting and suggestive argument and the *Gui Guzi* provides further evidence for it. The *Gui Guzi* also encourages complexity. “The categories of speech are many. He who enjoys complicated language without

getting confused, who soars high without getting lost...has learned the art of persuasion” (Tsao 93).

At the same time, there is no call for clarity or proof. There is no place for forensic rhetoric with its emphasis on proof and the search for facts. The political climate of China at the time ensured that pleasing the listener was the prerequisite of being a successful persuader. As the listener was often a ruler or prince with summative powers, then straightforward speaking was their prerogative. The hierarchical nature of society, involving as it did, having to persuade “upwards,” required speaking in a forked tongue.

Perhaps the most famous essay on persuasion of the Warring States period was written by the legalist philosopher Han Feizi, who was born towards the end of the Warring States period in 280 BCE. He was a privileged background—he was a royal prince of the State of Han (at the time, one of the Warring States) and was a student of the Confucian philosopher, Xunzi. Despite his position, his many memorials were ignored. His book on political strategy, the *Han Feizi*, however, was read by the Prince of Qin over whom it exerted a significant influence. It is ironic, therefore, that Han Feizi died while on Han emissary business to the state of Qin, poisoned by the Qin ruler.

Burton Watson has described Han Feizi as the “perfector” of the legalist school (4). The major theme of his book was the preservation and strengthening of the state. The philosophy or ruling strategy it promulgated, legalism, differed markedly from Confucianism in almost all aspects. It had no faith in the Confucian notion that good conduct by the Emperor would result in good governance and a stable state. Thus it had no faith in the sages of earlier times. Far from being inherently innocent and malleable by good example, people were inherently evil and needed to be controlled by law. The state could only be stable if the central government was strong, if there was a strong centralised bureaucracy and the implementation of a harsh legal code. The Chinese scholar of the early twentieth century, Hu Shi (*The Development of the Logical Method* 175–83), has summed up the key points of the *Han Feizi*.

In governing a state, the wise ruler does not depend on the people’s becoming good for his sake, but on their necessity not to do evil.

A wise man never expects to follow the ways of the ancients, nor does he set up any principle for all time.

To be sure of anything without corroborating evidence is stupidity. To base one’s argument on anything which one

cannot be sure is perjury. Therefore, those who openly base their argument on the authority of the sage-elders of antiquity, and who are dogmatically certain of the ages of Yao and Shun, are men either of stupidity or of wilful perjury.

It is worth noting how direct and *agonistic* the legalist style is, compared to the Confucian style. This shows that, while indirectness was normally adopted, this did not mean that directness never was. We shall return to this later when providing examples from Wang Chong's discourse and at various other points in the book. In his discussion of Arabic rhetoric, Hatim points out that "the motivated departure from linguistic norms" is a theme that has dominated Arab rhetorical thinking (25). This deliberate adoption of the unexpected is known in Arabic as "Iltiafāt," which Hatim describes as "the motivated switch from speaking in a more expected grammatical mode, to speaking in another, less expected mode" (25). The use of a direct rhetorical style by someone persuading from below to above can be seen as a type of "Iltiafāt."

Another way of considering this deliberate deviation from linguistic norms is to use the linguistic terms "unmarked" and "marked." Many rhetorical devices, expressions and even words can be classified as being unmarked or marked, depending on their use. For example, to ask, in English, "How old are you?" would be to use the unmarked form. But to ask, "How young are you?" would be to use the marked form. Many pairs of English adjectives operate in this way. "How tall/short are you?" would be another example. A second linguistic example is that the complex cause sequence which follows the subordinate to main sequence is unmarked in Chinese, while a complex cause which follows a main to subordinate sequence is marked. A simple example of this would be the following English sentence "You can't enter the building because there has been a fire," which follows an unmarked sequence in English. If translated retaining the main clause to subordinate clause sequence would be marked in Chinese.

As will become apparent, this is of particular interest for two reasons. First, the unmarked subordinate to main sequence allows for indirectness. Second the unmarked and marked orders in Chinese are reversed in English, where the main to subordinate sequence is the normal unmarked pattern.

Thus, in the Chinese context we can call indirectness the unmarked style, that is to say the style adopted in standard, normal circumstances, while the direct style is marked, that is to say it is used for special effect and/or in special circumstances.

To return to the text of the *Han Feizi*, Section 12 is called "On the Difficulties of Persuasion" (说难). By citing some excerpts, we hope the reader can gain a feel of the advice being given and will also, no doubt, be struck by the close

similarities of the advice and strategies provided by both the *Hanfeizi* and the *Gui Guzi*. These translations are taken from Burton Watson.

On the whole, the difficult thing about persuasion is to know the mind of the person one is trying to persuade and to be able to fit one's words to it.

Undertakings succeed through secrecy but fail through being found out.

The important thing in persuasion is to learn how to play up the aspects that the person you are talking to is proud of, and play down the aspect he is ashamed of.

Men who wish to present their remonstrances and expound their ideas must not fail to ascertain their ruler's loves and hates before launching into their speeches ... If you gain the ruler's love, your wisdom will be appreciated and you will enjoy favour as well. But, if he hates you, not only will your wisdom be rejected but you will be regarded as a criminal and thrust aside.... The beast called the dragon can be tamed and trained to the point where you may ride on its back. But on the underside of its throat it has scales a foot in diameter that curl back from the body, anyone who chances to brush against them is sure to die. The ruler of men too has his bristling scales. Only if a speaker can avoid brushing against them will he have any hope of success.

As with *The Gui Guzi*, there is no mention here of the justice of an argument or the necessity of proof. The main point, constantly reiterated, is not to displease the person one is attempting to persuade for fear of retribution, most commonly exile, but not infrequently execution, the fate suffered by Han Feizi himself, whose own directness may well have precipitated his downfall. Both works illustrate the intensely practical nature of rhetoric given the political conditions at the particular time. The need for extreme caution in such matters is described by Jenner, "The wise official did not take a strong position on matters that might bring a frown to the dragon countenance. That a few did is a mark of their personal courage" (41).

Legalism appeared to be vindicated as a more realistic and effective political system with the establishment of the Qin Dynasty, commonly regarded as the

first State to unify China. It is perhaps worth noting however, that the term *Zhong Guo*, which is commonly translated as the Middle Kingdom and, in so doing, gives the idea of China in the Centre of the world, is more accurately translated as the “central states,” meaning those states clustered around the yellow River in North China in contrast to the “barbarian” states to the North, West, and South (McDonald).

Legalism allowed no opportunity for arguing from below to above. While the strict and harsh laws applied to all citizens—and in this legalism claimed to be more egalitarian than Confucianism—the laws did not apply to the Emperor, whose task was not to obey the laws but to formulate them. The first emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang (r 221-210 BCE), exploited this to the hilt in establishing an empire in which all dissenting voices would be silenced. He ordered all books to be burned and several hundred scholars to be buried alive. His reign was mercifully short-lived.

The Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) replaced the Qin. Not surprisingly, the officials were still influenced by legalism and, again not surprisingly, these were opposed by the Confucian literati. The new empire encouraged debate and literati were invited to advise the emperor through court debates and “those whose arguments the emperor favoured would receive government posts” (You, “Building” 369). As we have seen, it was during one of these debates during the time of the Emperor Wu in 134 BCE that Dong Zhongshu successfully persuaded the Emperor to establish an academy that tolerated only Confucian schools of thought. This resulted in a Grand Academy with a state sanctioned Confucian canon. The canonical texts provided a route by which families entered into state service. This eventually led to the establishment of a civil service exam and, as we shall show in Chapter 3, the Song Dynasty inherited and then greatly expanded an exam system developed during the Sui-Tang dynasties. But the texts that constituted Chinese imperial culture were not fixed. The canon itself was expanded and read in different ways. As Lewis points out, “When the state defended itself through a group of texts, and justified itself through their teachings, then these writings could be invoked to criticise specific policies, or ultimately to condemn the state itself” (Lewis 362). The importance assigned to texts can hardly be overestimated. They created a model of society against which institutions were measured. Texts also created the basis of the educational program. To quote Lewis once more, “the Chinese empire became a realm built of texts” (362).

The importance and influence of these texts depended on the relative central authority of the empire at any one time and this also had a direct effect on the role and popularity of oral rhetoric. A centralised empire needs bureaucrats who can write documents. A centralised empire with a strong emperor is unlikely

to create an environment conducive to public oratory. On the other hand, when the country comprises several competing smaller states, oral persuaders (the *youshi* and *bianshi*) become much in demand, as was the case during the Warring States period. In addition, China's imperial history has meant that China has traditionally favoured written rhetoric over oral, while the comparatively democratic institutions of Classical Greece gave rise to a rhetoric that was primarily oral, although it needs to be stressed that most speeches were first written to be read aloud later. The early Greek handbooks on rhetoric lack appeals to authority, as such use of authority was uncongenial to fifth century BCE democratic ideals (Kennedy). Similarly, pre-medieval rhetoric in Europe was primarily an art of persuasion, it was primarily used in civil life and it was primarily oral (Camargo). The relative emphasis placed on oral and written rhetoric at any time can partly be explained by the nature of the political institutions in power at that time. This phenomenon is by no means uniquely Chinese. For example, the rise of city states in Italy by the end of the twelfth century saw the rise once again of spoken rhetoric as people needed to address assemblies.

In this chapter we have provided a brief introduction to the major rhetorical schools and styles of Ancient China. We have shown that the Chinese rhetorical tradition is not monolithic, but characterised by different and competing schools, although the Confucian school became dominant after it won imperial favour during the Han dynasty. As we shall show, however, the rhetorical tradition remained diverse. We have also shown that rhetorical styles are dynamic and heavily influenced by the relative status of writer/speaker and reader/listener. In Chapter 2 we turn to a survey of literary styles.

We conclude this chapter by summing up the main points:

- (i) Western rhetoric has its origins in the rhetoric of the law courts. While open to abuse, this presupposes a goal of discovering the facts or justice of a case, and is dependent upon proof. The protagonists in these debates were often equals, whose task was to persuade a third party.
- (ii) There was no such forensic rhetoric in China. The official law always operated in a vertical direction from the state upon the individual rather than on a horizontal plane between equal individuals. This meant that there was little adversarial debate between equals.
- (iii) The conditions surrounding the development of Western rhetoric encouraged direct, confrontational and agonistic exchanges, although that is not to say that arguing by analogy and other more oblique and indirect methods were not adopted when times justified this.

- (iv) The conditions surrounding the development of Chinese rhetoric encouraged those persuading up to couch their arguments in indirect ways—of speaking in “forked tongue”—for fear of offending the listeners. This is not to say that direct methods of argument were not adopted when times justified this or when the author was prepared to take a calculated risk.
- (v) To use a linguistic distinction, in classical Greece, direct methods of argument were unmarked, while indirect methods were marked. In Classical China, the opposite was true: indirect methods of argument were unmarked, while direct methods of argument were marked.
- (vi) The relative power of the emperor had a direct effect on rhetorical style, whether this was in China, early Greece and Rome, or Europe.
- (vii) Conditions in Classical China and respect for authority and hierarchy led to a preference for written rhetoric and “an empire built of texts.”
- (viii) The focus of rhetoric shifts between oral and written expression in both the “Western” and Chinese traditions.