Modern Chinese discourses, no matter whether on social or ideologi-
cal questions or on China’s intellectual and cultural heritage, are artic-
ulated to a large extent in terms that were coined and normalized as
translations of Western or Western-derived notions. Yet far from serv-
ing as simple equivalents of imported ways of understanding, many
terms of foreign origin have unfolded a life very much of their own in
modern Chinese contexts. More often than not they have acquired new
meanings that creatively alter, extend or even undermine established
European conceptions. In order to comprehend the resulting semantic
and conceptual differences, and not merely register them as deviations
from the ‘original’ Western meanings, historians of thought must pay
close attention to the multilayered process of translation and appropri-
ation from which these terms have emerged. In this paper, I will try to
illustrate this demand by presenting one particular case in some detail:
the introduction and naturalization of the occidental notion of ‘logic’
in modern Chinese texts and contexts.

1. WHEN THE TWAIN MET

Twentieth-century scholarship has securely established the fact that
explicit logical reflection can be traced back in China at least to the
fifth century BC.¹ The disputes of the ‘Hundred Schools’ of classical
Chinese philosophy incited a successive increase in argumentative
rigour and eventually led to a growing interest in problems similar to
those discussed in traditional European logic. The most famous attes-
tations of this interest are preserved in the “Dialectical Chapters” of
the Mozi (the so-called Mobian, late fourth to third century
BC), the sophisms of the Gongsun Longzi (third century BC),
the paradoxes of infinity ascribed to Hui Shi (c. 370–310 BC),
and Xunzi’s (third century BC) treatise on the “Rectification of

names” (zhengming pian 正名篇). Most of these deliberations are devoted to the analysis of ‘names’ (ming 名) and their relation to the objects at which they point. And although we find no systematic discussion of deductive forms of reasoning in the Mobian or the writings attributed to the ‘School of Names’ (mingjia 名家), there are interesting discourses on the significance of the position of individual names within larger units of speech or text and the properties of various types of analogies.

The early interest in logical reflection was revived during the third and fourth centuries AD by the mysticist xuanxue 玄學 or ‘School of Dark Learning’. Inspired by the rediscovery of the Mobian, Xuanxue-scholars considerably refined the previous understanding of the relationship between ‘names’ and ‘actualities’ (shi 實) or the ‘pattern (of things)’ (li 理) and expounded rules of successful argumentation. In the seventh and eighth centuries, logical thought in China was further enriched through the appropriation of sophisticated forms of Buddhist reasoning originating from India. In the translations of Xuanzang 玄奘 (600–664) and his followers, the treatises of the Indian hetu-vidyā doctrine were reformulated into the ingenious system of yinming 因明 (knowledge of reasons) which offered Chinese monks and literati for the first time formalized schemes to demonstrate the validity of their arguments and, more importantly, refute those of their opponents.

Despite these diverse traditions that survived on the margins of the classical canons, European logic was perceived as an entirely foreign area of intellectual inquiry when it initially became known in China during the seventeenth and, after an extended period of renewed indifference, once again towards the end of the nineteenth century. At the

---


turn of the century, Chinese bibliographers still felt at a loss when forced to address the subject: Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), for instance, called the only work on logic available in Chinese at the time a book “resisting any attempt at classification” (bu ke gui lei 不可歸類), and Huang Qingcheng 黃慶澄 (1863–1904) placed the same text in the category of works on ‘dialects’, i.e. foreign languages (fangyan 方言). 6 Merely two decades later, however, logic had not only become a well-established subject of Chinese university education but was also frequently cited in public debates. Moreover, there was now a rapidly growing number of works on the hitherto unknown academic field of ‘Chinese logic’, drawing already more or less confidently on a carefully defined textual canon and an extensive terminological repertoire. 7 Some authors had even begun to embark on comparative studies into the nature and origins of “the three great logical traditions”, as they came to be known, of Europe, India and China. 8

The following lexicographical sketch is intended as a first step in reconstructing the process of translation which made this strikingly rapid naturalization of the alien notion of logic in Chinese discourses possible. By tracing the different linguistic representations that were introduced, contested, adopted or, more often, rejected in China as possible equivalents of ‘logic’ from the seventeenth century onwards, I am not pretending to present an analysis of all the discursive layers that would need to be considered in a comprehensive history of logical discourse in modern China. Rather, my more modest aim is to


show that sinking a diachronic shaft through the stratified deposits of modern Chinese discursive history can, in some cases at least, provide a guideline along which more ambitious inquiries may proceed.\(^9\)

2. Words out of context

Before looking at the various Chinese renderings of the term ‘logic’ it may be useful to recall that the science was known under many different designations in the course of its history in the West. To cite only the more prominent examples, ‘logic’ was referred to by names as diverse as ‘dialectic’, ‘organon’, ‘canonic’, ‘medicina mentis’, ‘ars disputationis’, ‘philosophia rationalis’, ‘scientia scientiarum’ or ‘l’art de penser’.\(^10\) While each of these terms has its unique history, all were intended to highlight a particular quality of the discipline which the other names seemed to conceal, and this is precisely the point that was to fuel the debates about the most appropriate translation of the word in Chinese. Somewhat paradoxically, however, the semiotically most productive period in China was the long phase of almost complete indifference towards occidental logic extending from the seventeenth through the late nineteenth centuries.

1. Jesuit ‘logica’ and the ‘patterns of names’

The Jesuit missionaries who first presented Western logic to a Chinese readership in the early seventeenth century used the Latin terms \textit{logica} and \textit{dialectica} more or less interchangeably, despite the vivid

---

\(^9\) Among the many authors that have recently touched upon aspects of my topic, see in particular Dong Zhite 董志鐵. 1986. “Guanyu ‘luoji’ yiming de yanbian ji lunzhan” 關於‘邏輯’ 譯名的演變及論戰 (The evolution of and debates about Chinese translations of ‘logic’), \textit{Tianjin shida xuebao} 1, pp. 25–8; Huang Heqing 黃河清. 1994. “‘Luoji’ yiming yuanliu kao” 邏輯 ‘譯名源流考 (Historical sketch of Chinese translations of ‘logic’), \textit{Ciku jianshe tongxun} 5, pp. 11–5; Zhou Yunzhi 周雲之. 1995. “‘Mingbianxue’ zhi ming de youlai ji qi yueding sucheng guocheng” ‘名辨學’ 譯名的由來及其約定俗成過程 (The origin of the term ‘Chinese logic’ and the process of its popularization), in: \textit{Li you guran: jinian Jin Yuelin xiansheng bainian dansheng} 理有固然：紀念金岳霖先生百年誕生 (Pattern is certain: Commemorating the 100th birthday of Mr. Jin Yuelin). Edited by Zhongguo shenhui kexueyuan zhongguo tongxun 中國社會科學院哲學所通訊. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, pp. 140–57. For earlier discussions see below, ch. 4.

debates about the proper meanings of both terms in contemporary Europe. Yet, following the Jesuit Ratio studiorum, they employed logica as the primary name for the discipline. In 1623, Giulio Aleni (Ai Rulüe 艾儒略, 1582–1649) introduced the science under this name as one of the subjects taught in the preparatory year at European universities in his Xixue fan 西學凡 (General outline of Western learning) and the more widely read Zhifang waiji 職方外記 (Record of the places outside the jurisdiction of the Office of Geography). Lacking an established Chinese equivalent, Aleni chose to render the term in both texts by the phonetic replica luorijia 落日伽 (in the Jiangnan dialect of the time probably pronounced luoriga), to which he added the explanatory ‘translations’ (yìyán 譯言), or rather definitions, bian shifei zhi fa 明辨之法 (the method of discerning right/true from wrong/false) and mingbian zhi dao 明辨之道 (the way of lucid discernment). The first substantial introduction to European logic was published in 1631 by the Portuguese Jesuit Francisco Furtado (Fu Fanji 傅汎際, 1587–1653). The Mingli tan 名理探 (Logica, lit. ‘The exploration of the patterns of names’) was a partial translation of the Commentarii Collegii Conimbricences e Societate Iesu: In Universam Dialecticam Aristotelis Stagiritae, a voluminous textbook in Latin based on Aristotle’s Categories and Porphyry’s Eisagoge. Apart from the phonetic loan luorijia 落日伽, a homophone of Aleni’s transliteration, Furtado

15 Francisco Furtado (Fu Fanji 傅汎際) and Li Zhizao 李之藻. 1665 [1631]. Mingli tan 名理探 (Logica). 2 vols. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan.
16 The text was written at the University of Coïmbra and first printed in Cologne in 1607. The Chinese translation was based on the second edition, Cologne 1611. Cf. Xu Zongze 徐宗澤. 1665. “Mingli tan ba” 名理探跋 (Postface to the Mingli tan), in: Furtado and Li 1965, vol. 2, pp. 579–87; 581.
and his co-translator Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1565–1630)—who invented most of the terms employed in the *Mingli tan*, but died shortly before the joint effort was completed—offered a trope of related semantic renderings for *logica* which were allusive of *xuanxue* deliberations by referring to ‘names’ and their relation to the ‘pattern of things’. The most general of these renderings was *mingli* 名理, literally meaning ‘name and pattern’ or ‘eminent patterns’, but here clearly intended to denote ‘the patterns of names’. Terms derived from this compound included *mingli tan* 名理探 (the exploration of the patterns of names), *mingli zhi lun* 名理之論 (the theory of the patterns of names) and *mingli (zhi) xue* 名理 (之) 學 (the science of the patterns of names).  

In addition, their work introduced several paraphrastic translations that were freely employed as synonyms for *logica* throughout the book: *tuilun zhi zongyi* 推論之總藝 (the general art of inference), *tuilun zhi fa* 推論之法 (the methods of inference), *mingbian zhi xue* 明辯之學 (the science of lucid disputation) and a number of variations on these themes. Finally, Li and Furtado coined the term *bianyi* 辨義 as a loan translation of the Latin *ars disputationis* and offered *diyaledijia* 第亞勒第加 as a transliteration of *dialectica*.  

Since neither Li Zhizao nor Furtado left any explanation of their renderings of ‘logic’ or their view of the discipline’s relation to traditional Chinese thought, it is impossible to determine whether they actually intended to imply a tacit affinity between European studies on the ‘patterns of names’ and Chinese *xuanxue*, or simply adhered to the general Jesuit strategy to accommodate European notions through the reinterpretation, or occupation, of distinguished Chinese terms. In any case, their translation of the *Mingli tan* as a whole—and hence of the various terms for *logica* as well—was apparently so far removed from contemporary Chinese interest that it was almost immediately forgotten, at least outside the Christian community. Although an extended version of the text was included in the *Qionglixue* 窮理學 (*Philosophia*), a work compiled in 1683 by Ferdinand Verbiest (Nan
COMING TO TERMS WITH LOGIC

Huairen 南懷仁，1623–1688) as a summa of theologically acceptable science and philosophy\(^{21}\), neither the subject matter nor any of the terms used to render the Jesuit logica seem to have resurfaced in non-Christian writings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, while the Mingli tan may be taken, as Robert Wardy has argued, as proof that there are no obstacles inherent in the Chinese language that would obstruct the rendition and integration of theoretical notions developed in the West\(^{22}\), the work clearly failed to enlarge the terminological and conceptual repertoire of late Ming and Qing scholars. An ultimately esoteric notion like late medieval ‘logic’ could not possibly hope to be adopted in a foreign intellectual environment without faint interest on the part of the intended audience, no matter how well-disguised in traditional garments it was presented. And why would any Chinese without prior Christian inclinations go through the trial of studying the hundreds of forbiddingly technical terms introduced in the Mingli tan when already the first pages made it clear that the ultimate aim of the work was to lead the reader back “on the path of the one Truth” of a foreign God?\(^{23}\)

2. ‘Logic’ in Protestant writings and nineteenth-century dictionaries

The second phase in the Chinese encounter with European logic was off to a slow start, not least because the Protestant missionaries that began to arrive in China shortly after the beginning of the nineteenth century attributed not nearly as much importance to the subject as their Jesuit precursors. Logic played only a minor role in Protestant doctrine and the missionary strategy of the Protestant societies active in China was not primarily aimed at the scholarly elite. Nevertheless, there is scattered evidence that logic was taught in some Christian colleges open to Chinese students in the course of the nineteenth century. Logic classes were included, for example, in the curriculum of the Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca, established by Robert Morrison (1782–1834) in 1818, but the language of instruction there was Eng-


\(^{23}\)Furtado and Li 1965, p. 2.
lish and we have no trace of any Chinese terms related to logic emanating from that school.\textsuperscript{24} Courses in logic were reputedly also offered at St. John’s College in Shanghai from 1880 onwards. In an announcement in the daily Shenbao, these courses were advertised in Chinese as lessons in \textit{bianshixue} 習實學 (the science of discerning what is true/real) but once again the subject was to be taught in English.\textsuperscript{25}

References to logic remain similarly scarce throughout the century in Protestant writings introducing ‘Western knowledge’ (\textit{xixue} 西學) and the European educational system. One early exception is Ernst Faber’s (Hua Zhan 花之安, 1839–1899) \textit{Xiguo xuexiao} 西國學校 (Schools in the West) of 1873.\textsuperscript{26} In this often reprinted treatise, Faber presents logic as one of the disciplines taught in the faculties of ‘philosophy’ (\textit{zhixue} 哲學, the science of knowledge) of European universities. According to his outline, ‘logic’, transliterated as \textit{luxi} 路隙, … discusses how the soul expresses intentions and thoughts and distinguishes several kinds among them. It also explains why something is right/true or wrong/false. In addition, [logic] analyzes how perceptions, which enter [our consciousness] via the five sense organs and are then taken up by the intellect, are synthesized and outlines the reasons why things are understood clearly.\textsuperscript{27}

Faber thus introduces logic as a philosophical science exploring how humans actually think. This psychologistic view, reminiscent of much of the Neo-Kantian philosophy to which he may have been exposed during his studies in Germany, is reflected in the peculiar term he suggests as a tentative Chinese equivalent of ‘logic’: \textit{yifa} 意法 or ‘the

\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Lindsay Ride. 1957. \textit{Robert Morrison: The Scholar and the Man}. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{25} 
\textsuperscript{26} Faber, Ernst. 1873. \textit{Xiguo xuexiao} 西國學校 (Schools in the West). Guangzhou. Alternative editions of this book were printed under the more adequate title (\textit{Da} Deguo xuexiao lunliù) (大德國學校論略 (Brief Account of Schools in Germany)). 1902 [1897]. Edited by Yuan Zonglian 袁宗濂 and Yan Zhiqing 晏志清. Shanghai: Cuixin shuju 幕新書局, 19.7a
\textsuperscript{27} Faber 1873, reprinted in: \textit{Xizheng tongdian} 西政通典 (Comprehensive anthology of Western government). 1902 [1897]. Edited by Yuan Zonglian 袁宗濂 and Yan Zhiqing 晏志清. Shanghai: Cuixin shuju 幕新書局, 19.7a
methods of intentional thinking—a branch of knowledge, he hastens to add, for which no terminology exists in China and which is thus difficult to translate.  

In a very general manner, a number of Protestant books on natural theology and philosophy written during the second half of the nineteenth century touch upon principles of inductive reasoning and hence central aspects of Western logic. But even in these texts direct references to logic as a scientific discipline in its own right and merit are exceedingly rare. One of the few authors who mentions logic at all is William Muirhead (Mu Weilian, 1822–1900). In his Gezhi xinji (lit. ‘A new tool for the investigation of things’), a translation of Book I of Francis Bacon’s Novum Organon, Muirhead uses the expressions bianlun zhi dao ‘the way of reasoning’ and bianlun 辨論 (or 辨論) ‘reasoning’ to render the term ‘logic’.  

While this choice may seem acceptable per se, it was hardly suited to establish logic as a discipline on par with other sciences such as ‘chemistry’ (huaxue 化學), ‘mathematics’ (shuxue 數學), the physical sciences of ‘light’ (guangxue 光學), ‘sound’ (shengxue 聲學), ‘weights’ (zhongxue 重學), ‘heat’ (rexue 熱學) and ‘electricity’ (dianxue 電學) or for that matter ‘philosophy’ itself (zhixue 智學, lixue 理學, xingxue 性學 etc) whose status as independent fields of inquiry was indicated within their contemporary Chinese names by the suffix -xue (area of) knowledge/science. Moreover, and perhaps worse, Muirhead stretched the extension of bianlun and bianlun zhi dao beyond any recognizable limits by applying them in his text not only to render ‘logic’ but also to translate terms as diverse as ‘dialectic’, ‘syllogism’, ‘argumentation’/‘to argue’, ‘reasoning’, ‘demonstration’/‘to demonstrate’ and ‘dialectical invention’.  

---

28 Cf. ibid.  
30 William Muirhead (Mu Weilian). 1888. Gezhi xinji (The New Organon). Shanghai: Tongwen shuhui, pp. 1b (§ 11), 2a (§ 12), 20a (§ 80) and 40a (§ 127). An earlier version of this translation was first serialized in the missionary journal Yizhi xinlu (Monthly Educator) in 1878/79.  
31 For bianlun zhi dao or bianlun as ‘dialectic’, cf. ibid., pp. 3a (§ 20), 4a (§ 29), 11a (§ 63) and 14b (§ 69); ‘syllogism’, pp. 2a (§ 13) and 2b (§ 14); ‘argumentation’, p. 3b (§ 24); ‘to argue’, p. 6a (§ 43); ‘reasoning’, p. 4b (§ 33); ‘demonstration’ and ‘to demonstrate’, pp. 14a–b (§ 69); ‘dialectical invention’, p. 21a (§ 82).
The reluctance of Protestant missionaries to propagate the study of logic with the same care and urgency paid to other sciences certainly contributed to the persisting Chinese indifference towards the field. Until the very end of the nineteenth century, hardly any Chinese author refers to logic in his writings on the ‘new knowledge’ (xinxue 新學) streaming in from the West. Even in the popular discourses on the presumed “Chinese origin of Western knowledge” (Xixue Zhongyuan 西學中源), logic—like grammar—remains prominently absent.32

The most striking illustration of the enduring disregard for logic in our context, however, is the inability of nineteenth-century lexicographers to provide an accepted—or at least potentially acceptable—equivalent for the term. Apparently unaware of existing translations, the compilers of the Western-Chinese dictionaries that were published in the course of the nineteenth century either skipped the term ‘logic’ altogether (e.g., Robert Morrison, Walter H. Medhurst and Samuel Wells Williams) or felt compelled to propose a number of alternative renderings, none of which seems to have originated from or migrated into the actual Chinese lexicon. To cite only a few examples, Wilhelm Lobscheid offers in his English and Chinese Dictionary (1866–1869) no less than five alternatives: mingli 明理 (elucidating pattern) or mingli zhi xue 明理之學 (the science of elucidating pattern), lilun zhi xue 理論之學 (the science of organizing arguments), si zhi fa 思之法 (the methods of thinking) and, finally, lixue 理學 (the science of pattern), a term originally referring, of course, to the canonized synthesis of Neo-Confucian thought that had been employed as a translation for European ‘philosophy’ since the seventeenth century and was also listed as such in Lobscheid’s Dictionary itself.33 In a similar manner, Paul H. Perny presents the venerable Confucian term gewu 格物 (the

---


COMING TO TERMS WITH LOGIC

investigation of things) in his *Dictionnaire Français-Latin-Chinois* of 1869 not only as a translation of ‘logic’ but also of ‘philosophy’.

Slightly later, Justus Doolittle revives the term *tuilun zhi fa* 推論之法 (the methods of inference), that had already been used in the *Mingli tan*, and adds the supplementary rendering *minglun zhi fa* 明論之法 (the methods of elucidating arguments). Further suggestions include Séraphim Couvreur’s *bianlifa* 辨理法 (the methods of disputation), Gustave Schlegel’s *dao* 道 (the ‘way’, *logos*, reason, etc.) and *si zhi li* 思之理 (the patterns of thinking), and last but not least Kwong Ki-chiu’s (Kuang Qizhao 鄭其照) clumsy paraphrase *xuekuo xinsi zhi fa* 學擴思之法 (the methods of learning to extend one’s thoughts), which all rightfully joined the growing pile of decontextualized and consequently almost inevitably indigestible renderings of a still thoroughly foreign notion.

3. TERMS IN COMPETITION

The terminological confusion that resulted from the continuing indifference towards logic was quickly reduced to competition between a limited number of alternatives when Chinese scholars and officials eventually decided at the turn of the century that they had to come to terms with the discipline—if only because it was part of the educational system of Meiji Japan whose adoption as a blueprint for China’s own modernizing efforts was advocated by a growing number of more or less influential reformers in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894/95.

---


1. Bianxue 辨學 or ‘the science of disputation’

The first candidate in this competition was proposed by Joseph Edkins (Ai Yuese 艾約瑟, 1823–1905), one of the few Protestant missionaries who tried to present a picture of Western civilization in his Chinese writings that went beyond the narrow limits dictated by the demands of the Christian faith and practical utility. Already in 1857, Edkins had published a series of essays on Western literature in the Liuhe congтан 六合叢談 (Shanghae Serial) that entailed a biography of Cicero, a key figure in the development of European logic. However, in his brief outline he only mentions the young Cicero’s fondness of ‘rhetorics’ or ‘argumentation’ (bianlun 辯論) and fails to inform his readers that it was the great Roman orator who popularized the Latin term ‘logica’ that was to be adapted in all European languages as the standard name for the discipline. 39

Edkins obviously found it difficult to come up with an appropriate Chinese equivalent of the term ‘logic’. In his “Yalisiduodeli zhuan” (Biography of Aristotle), written in 1875, he suggests the phonetic rendering luojige 羅吉格 and the paraphrase bianbo zhi li 辯駁之理 (the patterns of refutation). 40 In the chapter on ‘philosophy’ (lixue 理學) of his Xixue lüeshu (Brief description of Western knowledge), which was first published in 1886, he then suggests the terms lunbian lixue 論辯學 (the philosophy of argumentation) and libianxue 理辯學 (the science of orderly disputation). 41 Probably due to the commercial success of this work, at least the term lunbian lixue seems to have gained some currency. 42 Nonetheless, it was soon replaced by Edkins’ final choice, the much more concise bianxue 辨學 (the science of disputation).

Edkins introduced this new term in his Bianxue qimeng 辨學啟蒙 (Primer of logic), the first book on logic available in Chinese since the publication of the Mingli tan almost two hundred and fifty years ear-

40 Joseph Edkins. 1875. “Yalisiduodeli zhuan” 亞里斯多得里傳 (Biography of Aristotle), Zhong-Xi wenjian lu 32, pp. 7a–13b; 11a.
41 Joseph Edkins. 1886a. Xixue lieshu 西學略述 (Brief description of Western knowledge). Beijing: Zong shuiwusi, ch. 6, passim.
COMING TO TERMS WITH LOGIC

43 The *Bianxue qimeng* was based on the most popular introduction to the subject in contemporary Europe, William Stanley Jevons’ *Primer of Logic*.44 Edkins intended the term *bianxue*, that he had coined after much deliberation for his translation of this work, as a loan rendition of the English ‘science of reasoning’ which, according to Jevons, was the most fitting definition of the discipline as a whole. In his preface, Edkins went on to explain that *bianxue* as presented in the *Bianxue qimeng* had nothing in common with the Christian ‘art of refutation’ as exemplified by apologetic Jesuit treatises such as Matteo Ricci’s (Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552–1610) *Bianxue yidu* 辯學遺譜 (Testament in defence of the faith).45 Rather, he says:

> bianxue teaches us to correctly discern right from wrong, and this enables us to increase our knowledge, and knowledge, as the great English scholar Bacon said, is power.46

Edkins’ new term was thus invested with a new understanding of the science: no longer the handmaiden of the Christian faith, the ‘logic’ he advocated was a tool of scientific and socio-political progress.

Although the promise of this Baconian conception was precisely what more and more Chinese scholars and officials were looking for in their studies of Western knowledge, it took a full decade before the

---


45 *Bianxue qimeng* 辯學啟蒙, p. i. Edkins only mentions Matteo Ricci. 1610, *Bianxue yidu* 辯學遺譜 (Testament in defence of the faith). Reprinted in: *Tianxue chuhan*, vol. 2, pp. 637–88, but there are many other instances of *bianxue* being used in the sense of ‘apologetics’ or ‘the art of refutation’ in Jesuit and later Protestant writings. It is therefore not easy to see on what grounds so many historians of Chinese logic (cf. all articles mentioned in footnote 9 above) credit Ricci with coining the term *bianxue* as an equivalent of ‘logic’, especially since the *Bianxue yidu* was in no way designed as an introduction to logic but rather as a collection of arguments refuting heretic Buddhist teachings. Equally erroneous is the claim (Masini 1997, p. 546) that *bianxue* was already used in the sense of ‘logic’ in Aleni’s *Xixue fan*. There, *bianxue* clearly denotes ‘controversy’, one of the six sub-disciplines of late medieval ‘logic’ or *luorijia*. Cf. Aleni 1623a, p. 32. Much closer to ‘logic’ is a passage in the *Mingli tan* (Furtado and Li 1965, p. 36) where the term *bianxue* is employed to render ‘dialectica’ in the narrow sense of the ‘art of opinion’. Finally, Ernst Faber had used *bianxue* as a translation of ‘rhetorics’ in his *Xiguo xuexiao* (cf. Faber 1902 [1873], 19.2a) but there is no evidence that Edkins was aware of this conflicting choice which may have led to confusion among monolingual Chinese readers.

46 *Bianxue qimeng*, p. 1b.
Bianxue qimeng eventually reached a larger audience and the term bianxue gained wider acceptance.47 For some time, bianxue then even seemed set to become the standard name for the science, if only for the rather awkward reason that it was employed in the official statutes for institutions of higher education published in 1902.48 Solely for this reason, bianxue was recommended by the Office for the Standardization of Terminology at the Ministry of Education (Xuebu bianding mingciguan 學部編訂名詞館) in 190849, and it was still marked as a term ‘approved by the Ministry [of Education]’ (buding 部定) in Karl Hemeling’s English-Chinese Dictionary of 1916.50 Yet, despite this official backing bianxue was only able to oust earlier missionary suggestions—the only serious contender among these being Lobscheid’s lixue that was revived, albeit to no avail, by John Fryer (Fu Lanya 傅蘭雅, 1839–1928) in 1898.51 Against terms coined and propagated by Chinese writers themselves, Edkins’ invention could not stand.

2. Mingxue 名學 or ‘the science of names’

The first of these new contestants was introduced in 1895 by Yan Fu 嚴復 (1851–1921), the first Chinese scholar to actively promote the study of logic, for instance, through the establishment of a short-lived Logical Society (Mingxuehui 名學會) and numerous public lectures.52

---

51 John Fryer (tr.). 1898. Lixue xuzhi 理學須知 (What must be known about logic). Shanghai: Gezhi shushi.
To be sure, Yan Fu was mainly attracted to the discipline because of the intimate connection between logic, knowledge and power that he encountered in the works of Bacon, Mill and their followers. In accordance with this understanding, Yan presented logic as an “art indispensable for all scientific inquiry” in the preface to his wildly popular Tianyanlun 天演論, a partial translation of Thomas Huxley’s Evolution and Ethics. Nonetheless, his rendition of the term ‘logic’ by mingxue 名學 (the science of names), which he applied consistently throughout his work, seems to have been motivated by more general concerns than the ubiquitous search for wealth and power. Thus, in the first “Note” to his translation of John Stuart Mill’s A System of Logic (Mule mingxue 穆勒名學, 1902–1905), Yan writes:

Logic (luoji 雜輯) is translated here as mingxue [the science of names]. The meaning of the name logic goes back to Greece; it is derived from the root ‘logos’ (luogesi 綜合). The name ‘logos’ has two meanings: it is used for the ideas in our minds and the words coming out of our mouths. In extension, it is used to denote a theory or a particular science. Today, in the West the names of all the individual sciences end with -logy which means ‘logic’. … On closer examination, ‘logos’ is one of the most valuable things in our life. It is precisely this thing which Buddhists call ‘atman’, Christians call ‘soul’, Laozi calls ‘dao’ and Mengzi calls ‘human nature’. Therefore, the meaning of the name ‘logos’ is most subtle and refined, and therefore this science is called ‘logic’. As Bacon said: “This science is the method of all methods, the


55 Yan’s authorship of the term mingxue is sometimes contested with reference to a text entitled Mingxue leitong 名學類論 that was supposedly published by unknown Protestant missionaries at the Lexuexi tang 樂學社堂 in 1824. Cf. e.g. Wang Jianji 王建基. 1979. Zhongguo luoji sixiangshi (History of logical thought in China). Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, pp. 405–6. However, this assertion seems hardly convincing since no one has been able to locate this text, and, to my knowledge at least, it is not mentioned in any of the bibliographies of Western knowledge or any of the scientific and philosophical texts published during the late Qing. At any rate, even if the text existed, it failed to produce any measurable impact.
science of all sciences”. … The earlier translations of logic that I have seen are far too narrow. There is the Mingli tan, translated by Li Zhizao at the end of the Ming dynasty, and today there is the Bianxue qimeng, translated at the Inspectorate General of Maritime Customs. But neither ‘exploration’ (tan) nor ‘disputation’ (bian) are appropriate to express the breadth and extension of this science. In order to come closer to it, [logic] must be translated as the ‘science of names’ (mingxue). For ming (name) is the only word in the Chinese language that is nearly comparable in its subtlety, refinement and extension to ‘logos’.56

Even to his contemporaries Yan’s explanation seemed in many ways peculiar. Not only did he misinterpret the term mingli tan by suggesting that within this compound tan ‘exploration’ was meant to render ‘logic’. More importantly, his argument in favour of ming as the only possible translation of logos was utterly unconvincing. For why should ming be closer to logos than terms like dao 道, li 理 or even Li Zhizao’s mingli 名理? Liang Qichao was thus probably right when suggesting in 1904 that Yan Fu’s true intention in the choice of mingxue was to appropriate Western logic, at least in name, to the mingjia 名家, the sophistic ‘School of Names’ of ancient Chinese thought that came to be known in the West as the ‘Logicians’.57 The price Yan was willing to pay in order to establish and uphold this implicit analogy was, as other critics like Zhu Zhixin added, to imply that logic was still a term- or concept-based discipline, i.e., that concepts or terms rather than propositions or sentences functioned as the basic units of logical inquiry. In spite of such criticisms and unlike most of the other terms coined by Yan, mingxue was circulated for some decades and was even endorsed by the Chinese Science Society (Zhongguo kexueshe 中國科學社) in 1916.59


58 Zhu Zhixin 朱執信. 1905. “Jiu lunlixue bo Xinmin congbao lun geming zhi miu” 就論理學駁新民報論革命之謬 (Applying logic to refute the errors in a discussion of revolution in the Xinmin congbao), Minbao 6, pp. 65–78; 65.

59 Zhongguo kexueshe 中國科學社. 1916. “Zhongguo kexueshe xianyong mingci-biao” 中國科學社現用名詞表 (Table of terms used by the Chinese Science Society). Kexue 2.12, pp. 1369–1402; 1370.
Another new and for some time seemingly most successful rendition of ‘logic’ was introduced immediately after the turn of the century from Japan. Amidst the torrent of textbooks on scientific subjects that were translated from Japanese in the first years of the century, a small number was dedicated to logic. The terms lunlixue or ‘the science of reasoning’ were used to render ‘logic’ in most of these works and quickly gained currency, were graphic loans from the Japanese translations ronrigaku or ‘the science of the patterns of argumentation’ or ronri ‘the patterns of argumentation’.

Like the Chinese bianxue, ronrigaku was coined as a loan rendition of the English ‘science of reasoning’. The term owed its normalization above all to the interventions of Nishi Amane, the most prolific translator of Western thought in Meiji Japan, who had supported this choice in a short but controversial debate. Nishi had championed ronri(-gaku) after proposing and subsequently abandoning several tentative Sino-Japanese equivalents, such as chichi-gaku (Ch. zizhixue, the science of extending knowledge) and meirongaku (Ch. minglixue), a term he had culled from Lobscheid’s English and Chinese Dictionary. Ronri(-gaku) itself was borrowed by inversion from lilun zhixue, another one of Lobscheid’s hitherto infertile prescriptions. The most important contestants of...
ronri(-gaku) in the Japanese debate were ronsetsugaku 論說學 (Ch. lunshuxue, the science of argumentation and explanation), kakuchi tetsugaku 格致哲學 (Ch. gezhi zhexue, the philosophy of science) and ronpō 論法 (Ch. lunfa, the methods of argumentation), but not least due to Nishi’s authority all were soon displaced and superseded.\(^{65}\)

The sweeping success of lunli and lunlixue in China during the first years of the century cannot be explained by the intrinsic qualities of the terms alone. If there is any significant difference to bianxue, lunli and lunlixue seem to emphasize even more clearly that logic is concerned with the analysis of propositions rather than terms or concepts. However, the strongest argument in favour of the Japanese loans was the sheer numbers in which terms from Japan had begun to arrive in China. It was again Liang Qichao who highlighted this aspect with due candour when justifying his own (inconsistent) adoption of the term:

In the Ming dynasty, the original word ‘logic’ was translated by Li Zhizao as mingli. Recently, Mr. Yan [Fu] from Houguan rendered it as mingxue … But with regard to the meaning of the original, these translations do not appear to be exhaustive. Here, I use the word lunlixue which is commonly used in Japan. In the future, the learned strata of our China will have intimate relations with the learned strata of Japan. Therefore, I prefer to draw … terms from Japan in order to prevent them from differing too much from future translations.\(^{66}\)

Even though Liang’s prophetic statement proved to hold true for some decades to come, the Chinese scholars who eventually applied themselves to the study of logic produced some more terminological alternatives. Besides several new phonetic renderings, which are listed in Table I in the Appendix, suggestions include the revival of the Jesuit terms mingli and minglixue\(^ {67}\), an alternative written representation of bianxue 辯學\(^ {68}\), as well as new creations such as tuilixue (the science of inference), sixiang gongli zhi xue 思想公理之學 (the science of the general laws of thinking)\(^ {69}\), sixiangxue 思想學 (the science

---

\(^{66}\) Liang Qichao, “Mozi zhi lunlixue”, 37.55.  
\(^{67}\) Li Di 李樹 (tr.). 1908. Minglixue 名理學 (Logic). Shanghai: Zhendan shuyuan, p. 2a.  
of thinking)\(^{70}\) or *silixue* 思理學 (the science of the patterns of thinking)\(^{71}\). Perhaps the most unusual and sophisticated of the new candidates was Ma Xiangbo’s 馬相伯 (1840–1939) *yuanyan* 原言 (the foundations of words)\(^{72}\), but this term slipped no more slowly into oblivion than the other novices.

Only *bianxue*, *mingxue* and *lunli(xue)* found their way into public discourse. Thus, by the end of the Qing the state of the Chinese translations of ‘logic’ resembled that of the names of most other branches of knowledge that had moved into the focus of Chinese attention since 1895: one term coined by Yan Fu competed with one or more terms borrowed from Japanese and a number of older or alternative renderings that were used significantly less often. One therefore seemed to have good reason to assume that in due course the Japanese loans *lunlixue* and *lunli* would be normalized as standard Chinese designations. But in contrast to other sciences and arts, such as physics, philosophy, sociology, politics and many more that have kept their Japanese-derived names until today, the history of the Chinese coming to terms with ‘logic’ took an unexpected turn.

4. **WHAT’S IN A NAME?**

This turn was initiated through a short essay by Zhang Shizhao 章士釗 (1881–1973). The article, first published in November 1910\(^{73}\), provoked a controversy that raged on for almost a decade in journals and

---


\(^{72}\) Ma introduced a whole new system of names for the modern sciences based on the Latin roots of their Western designations. With regard to logic he argued that *yan* 言 ‘words’ was more adequate than *ming* 名 ‘names’, since it could refer to individual terms as well as phrases or sentences. Cf. Ma Xiangbo 馬相伯 . 1926 [1906]. *Zhizhi qianshuo* 致知淺說 (Introduction to philosophy). Reprinted in: id. 1996. *Ma Xiangbo ji* 馬相伯集 (The works of Ma Xiangbo). Edited by Zhu Weizheng 朱維鶴. Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, pp. 635–738; 640.

newspapers, such as Guofengbao 國風報, Minlibao 民立報, Duli zhoubao 立憲週報, Yongyanbao 誠言報 and Jiayin zazhi 甲寅雑誌, and involved many prominent writers. Since the arguments that were put forward by either side in the course of the debate applied no less to the translation of ‘logic’ than that of other foreign notions, the discussion deserves closer scrutiny. Previous debates, like the fierce controversies surrounding Yan Fu’s stylistic mannerisms, had failed to elaborate general principles for the creation of adequate terms. Now, the learned Chinese audience indulged for the first time in systematic theoretical reflection on the properties of ideal translation terms.

1. Zhang Shizhao and ‘the science of luoji’

Zhang Shizhao, who incited the debate, had studied economics, law and logic in England and Scotland between 1907 and 1910. During his studies he had developed some insightful ideas on the particular problems facing Chinese translators of scientific and philosophical terms from Western languages. The term ‘logic’ served him as a welcome example when he expounded his views in a series of articles and many replies to critics and supporters.

Zhang’s starting point is the contention that semantic loans are hardly ever able to do justice to the original terms they are intended to render. Thus, mingxue is in his opinion only appropriate to translate the Aristotelian or traditional notion of ‘logic’ but entirely incapable to denote modern ‘logic’ as it is commonly understood since Bacon. Bianxue and lunlixue share similar shortcomings, since they are both derived from the word ‘reasoning’ and hence represent no more than ‘one part of deductive logic’ (tida luoji zhi yibu 提達邏輯之一部). The common ill of all three terms is for Zhang the result of a specific feature of the Chinese language, namely not to allow the representation of ‘words from other languages’. In general, translators have therefore no choice but to search for semantic renditions. Ideally, they look for one or two Chinese words (or characters) that have the same extension as the original term. But because they are in most cases una-

---


75 Cf. ZSZQJ, vol. 1, p. 449.

ble to find such words, Zhang continues, many tend to offer transla-
tions of the definitions instead of the foreign terms themselves. The
danger of this common procedure is that new translation terms will
have to be created when the definitions on which the previous terms
were based are altered or refuted. Repeated changes in terminology,
however, are an obstacle to scientific and thus economic, social and
political progress.\footnote{Cf. ibid.}

The solution, which Zhang Shizhao explicitly advocates in several
articles with regard to ‘logic’, is to abandon semantic translation alto-
gether and rely on phonetic renderings instead. In the case of ‘logic’,
he recommends to use the words \textit{luoji} 邏輯 or \textit{luojixue} 邏輯學 which
Yan Fu had employed—for want of an accepted Chinese syllabary—
as phonetic representations of the English term ‘logic’ in his transla-
tion of Mill’s ‘science of names’. The decisive advantage of these ren-
derings over their competitors is, according to Zhang, that they are
free from the misleading connotations inevitably invoked by semantic
renditions. If there is any ‘inconvenience’ for the reader, he argues, it
is that s/he will be forced to look up the definition of the words when
reading them for the first time since they do not contain in themselves
any obvious clue as to how they are to be understood.

Public response to Zhang’s case in favour of presumably semanti-
cally ‘neutral’ phonetic renderings was lively and diverse. Many com-
ments are interesting in themselves as they offer valuable insights into
the state of public awareness on the question of translation. Thus, a
number of readers agreed with the general thrust of Zhang’s argument
but demanded further examples for grave misunderstandings caused
by semantic borrowing. Others wished a clear-cut definition for \textit{luoji}
or asked for a hint on where to find the ‘original meaning’ of the com-
pound and the individual characters in the ancient classics.\footnote{Cf. the “Letters to the Editor” in \textit{Minlibao}, April 18, 1912. Reprinted in: \textit{ZSZQJ},
vol. 2, pp. 201–3; and \textit{Minlibao}, April 21, 1912. Reprinted in: \textit{ZSZQJ}, vol. 2, p. 212.}

And a certain Geng Yi 耿毅 suggested to employ the word \textit{luoji}, as Zhang
had demanded, but to represent it in writing with the rare characters
that graphically signalled a relation to mental activity through the
use of the ‘mind-heart’ radical.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Fanyi yanjiu lunwenji} 翻譯研究論文集 (1894–1948) (Essays on translation,
會 et al. Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, p. 42.}
2. Semantic vs. phonetic borrowing: luoji and its others

Readers taking issue with Zhang Shizhao’s theoretical points were slow to respond. Their main contentions were summarized by a certain Zhang Lixuan 張禮軒 in two “Letters to the Editor” that were reproduced in the Minlibao.\(^8^0\) In these letters, Zhang argues that phonetic loans should exclusively be employed to represent the names of individuals and places or newly discovered and invented things and substances. In all other instances, semantic loans are to be preferred: (i) because they are able to provide lay readers with an immediate understanding of the subject in question; (ii) because only semantic translations are able to preserve the connection of a term to the semantic field from which it originates in the foreign language; (iii) because phonetic loans are much more difficult to memorize; (iv) because strict application of Zhang Shizhao’s principle to use phonetic renderings whenever no fully appropriate semantic translation can be found will inevitably lead to a drastic increase of ‘meaningless’ words and characters in the Chinese language; and, finally, (v) because phonetic renderings risk causing unintended terminological multiplication since one and the same term may be transliterated in many different ways depending on personal preferences or regional variations in pronunciation.\(^8^1\)

Zhang Shizhao did not take the pains to reply in detail to each of these contentions in the course of the debate. He insisted, however, that the seemingly unproblematic provision of an immediate ‘general idea’, which his opponents took as an advantage of semantic translation, was more often than not the source of severe misunderstandings. In his view, it was precisely the strength of phonetic loans that readers could not “look at the characters in order to get an understanding” (\textit{wangwen er shengzhi} 望文而生知) of an unknown term but were rather forced to inquire into its proper definition.\(^8^2\) In brief, leaving foreign terms in their original alterity seemed to him as the only guar-

---


\(^8^1\) Zhang lists \textit{luoji} 落集, \textit{luoji} 落輯 and \textit{laojie} 老詁 as examples of further possible phonemic replicas of ‘logic’. Cf. id. 1912a, ZSZQJ, vol. 2, p. 305.

antee against aesthetically more satisfying, but inescapably misleading appropriations.

It is of course difficult to assess which side convinced more readers by looking only at the published arguments. Certainly, semantic translation is still the predominant form of borrowing in modern Chinese. Nevertheless, the gradual dissemination of the term *luoji* during the first decades of the Republican period attests that Zhang Shizhao succeeded at least in this particular case to establish a phonetic rendering as an attractive alternative to existing semantic translations—despite the ‘systematic pressure’ exerted by the fact that the Chinese designations of all other sciences were borrowed or reimported from Japan. The terms *luoji* and *luojixue* were also applied in most translations of works on mathematical or symbolic logic when the latter began to take root in China from 1920 onwards.\(^83\) And the arguments that were exchanged in the debate remained a common point of reference for future discussions on the problems of translation in China.

Yet, at least until 1950 when *luoji* and *luojixue* were normalized as standard designations for ‘logic’ in Mainland China, Zhang Shizhao did not succeed in creating a term acceptable to everyone writing on the subject. Even after the debate had come to a halt, a number of new terms were introduced. Without doubt the most prominent examples are Sun Yat-sen’s (Sun Zhongshan 1866–1925) creations *lize* (the rules of reason[ing]) and *lizexue* (the science of the rules of reason[ing]) which are routinely used, alongside or in the place of *luoji* and *luoji(-xue)*, by many logicians in Taiwan and Hong Kong, if only to express political allegiance.\(^84\)

5. **Multiple Identities**

Still, this is not the end of our story. In the course of the 1920s and 30s it was further complicated by the successive formation of the study of ‘Chinese logic’ as an independent field of academic inquiry. Against the background of the debate on ‘Eastern and Western culture’ (*Dong*)

---


\(^{84}\) Sun Zhongshan 孫中山. 1918. “Sun Wen xueshuo” 孫文學說 (The doctrine of Sun Wen), in: *Guofu quanji* 國父全集 (The complete works of Sun Yat-sen). 1965. Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, vol. 1., pp. 113–73. See also Table 1 in the Appendix.
 Xi wenhua 東西文化）and the ‘revaluation of China’s cultural heritage’ (zhengli guogu 整理國古), a number of prominent intellectuals embarked on a systematic reconstruction of the neglected logical legacy of ancient Chinese philosophy. Thanks to these efforts, the initially foreign notion of ‘logic’ has acquired multiple identities in Chinese discourses that are difficult to translate back into European languages.

1. Multiplying a discipline: ‘Chinese’, ‘Western’ and ‘Indian’ logic

What we have come to know as ‘Chinese logic’ was rediscovered in China shortly after the turn of the century by scholars such as Liang Qichao, Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (1868–1936), Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) and Liu Shipei 劉師培 (1884–1920). In their tentative explorations, these early pioneers of the field applied various sets of basic logical notions that had just found their way into the Chinese lexicon to ancient texts like the “Dialectical Chapters” of the Mozi or Xunzi’s treatise on the “Rectification of Names”. All insisted that the subject matter of what they unearthed as a forgotten tradition of ‘Chinese logical thinking’ was basically identical with European logic, and therefore found no reason to separate the two areas by terminological means. However, the second generation of Chinese historians of ‘Chinese logic’ thought otherwise. In the aftermath of the May Fourth movement, the need for a discrete Chinese identity began to outweigh the claim to participation in universalist scientific discourses. Several authors now called for a terminological distinction between the different ‘logical traditions’ that would reflect the presumed uniqueness of each nation’s and culture’s particular approach to the subject.

Zhang Shizhao, who had made such a strong case in favour of luoji as the most adequate rendition of Western logic, was also instrumental in this new effort at terminological separation. In a series of essays

---


written between 1920 and 1923, Zhang interpreted the theoretical teachings of the Mobility as instances of a distinctly Chinese ‘science of names’ (mingxue) that combined basic formal insights with strong ethical aspirations.\(^{87}\) Zhang’s idea to employ different terms for ‘Chinese’ and ‘European’ logic was readily taken up by a host of other writers, even though not all of them agreed with his specific interpretative choices. For example, Guo Zhanbo 郭湛波 argued that ‘Chinese logic’ was not so much about the qualities of ‘names’ but rather, similar to traditional Western dialectics, about the nature and strategies of ‘disputation’ (bian 辨), and that it was therefore more fitting to call it bianxue 辨學 or ‘the science of disputation’.\(^{88}\) Wang Zhanghuan 王章煕 and others recognized this point but added that the term mingxue could still serve to designate a sub-discipline devoted to the ‘logic of names’ within the more comprehensive ‘science of disputation’.\(^{89}\) Finally, the renowned Buddhist logician Yu Yu 虞愚 and many others employed lunlIxue 論理學 as the general name for the science and then differentiated the sub-branches luoji （‘Western logic’), mingxue （‘Chinese logic’） and yinming （‘Indian logic’）.\(^{90}\)

2. Mingbianxue 名辯學 or ‘the science of names and disputation’

As their new and more specific uses became increasingly popular due to these redefinitions, both mingxue and bianxue were employed less and less often to denote ‘Western logic’, i.e. the term they had been coined to translate in the first place. Nonetheless, well into the 1940s no final agreement could be reached as to which designation was the most appropriate name for the increasingly well-established academic subject of ‘Chinese logic’. Some writers tried to overcome the prevailing uncertainty by introducing a new term that combined the two aspects that had been singled out as the distinguishing features of China’s logical heritage and proposed to call ‘Chinese logic’ mingbian 名辯 or mingbianxue 名辯學 (the science of names and disputa-

---

\(^{87}\) These essays are now available in ZSZQJ, vol. 7, pp. 575–609.

\(^{88}\) Cf. e.g. Guo Zhanbo 郭湛波. 1932. Xian Qin bianxueshi 先秦辯學史 (A history of pre-Qin logic). Shanghai: Zhonghua yinshuju, pp. i–v.

\(^{89}\) Cf. e.g. Wang Zhanghuan 王章煕. 1930. LunlIxue daquan 論理學大全 (Comprehensive compendium of logic). Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, pp. 2–3.

\(^{90}\) Yu Yu 虞愚. 1937. Zhongguo mingxue 中國名學 (Chinese logic). Chongqing: Zhengzhong shuju, p. 3. For many other suggestions confirming the logical separation between ‘Chinese’, ‘Western’ and ‘Indian’ logic, see Zhongguo luojiishi ziliao-xuan, vol. 5.1, passim.
Initially, we may note, these new hybrid creations were mainly used in polemical contexts, e.g. in Guo Moruo’s 郭沫若 (1892–1979) Shi pipan shu 十批判書 (Ten critical essays). As decidedly positive designations for ‘Chinese logic’ they are advocated only since the 1980s. Drawing on an early essay by the philosophical authority Zhang Dainian 張岱年, contemporary Mainland historians of logic, such as Liu Peiyu 劉培育 and Zhou Yunzhi 周云之, are forcefully promoting the terms mingbianxue and mingbian as the proper designations for their field of expertise. Whether this effort to complete the terminological segregation between ‘Chinese’ and ‘Western’ logic will be successful, remains open. In any case, however, it is a striking example for an unpredictable transformation of a European notion in a non-European context.

CONCLUSION

The winding tale of the introduction and naturalization of the occidental notion of ‘logic’ in Chinese discourses allows some concluding remarks. First of all, linguists used to regarding technical terms as proper nouns which are given their meaning through the definitions of experts in specialized debate, will have assumed that looking at the different replicas that were introduced as translations of a particular notion would not tell us much about its actual understanding. From a purely linguistic point of view this may be true. However, I hope to have shown that historians of thought can gain some insights from the way in which a certain notion was appropriated in a foreign linguistic and cultural environment, particularly in periods of fundamental intellectual changes. The fervor with which Chinese scholars have debated the rendering of ‘logic’ testifies how much importance they attributed to the choice of adequate linguistic representations of this and other

91 The terms mingbian and mingbianxue can be traced back at least to the 1930s, cf. e.g. Du Shousu 杜守素. 1936. Xian Qin zhi shishi xiang 先秦諸子思想 (The thought of the pre-Qin philosophers). Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, pp. 80–114.


94 See the account of these efforts in Zhou Yunzhi 周云之. 1996. Mingbianxue lun 名辯學論 (The science of names and disputation). Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe (Guoxue congshu 18), pp. 2–49.
originally unfamiliar notions. The terms that were suggested and the arguments which were put forward in favour of or against a specific rendering are valuable leads in the reconstruction of their intellectual affiliations and proclivities, and I would argue that there are comparable stories to be told about many more terms, especially in the realms of philosophy and political thought, that may contribute to a fuller understanding of modern Chinese intellectual history.

Secondly, the adventures of ‘logic’ in China illustrate that personal preferences and individual interventions can influence, at least in the initial period of the naturalization of a particular notion or branch of knowledge, not only the terms that will be used by the members of a linguistic community but also the understanding of the notion or the discipline as a whole. At times they may even determine the future course of reception and adoption. The case of Zhang Shizhao demonstrates that translators are able to make a difference, even to the extent of breaching the unifying power of seemingly well-established sets of terms, like the Chinese names for the sciences derived from Japan.

Finally, the story of ‘logic’ is a reminder to beware of thoughtless retranslation. While in Chinese the semantic nuances and variations of the different terms that have evolved from the Western notion of ‘logic’ are, as a rule, more or less clearly distinguished, foreign readers tend to retranslate all of them—bianxue, mingxue, lunlixue, luoji, lize as well as mingbianxue etc.—by the same Western term, namely ‘logic’. In this way, however, the unexpected meanings and connotations which these and other terms have acquired in modern Chinese discourses—and with them many of the most intriguing aspects of modern Chinese intellectual history—will inevitably be lost. For, as Hans Blumenberg has observed:

It would be a misconception to believe that the phenomenon is there first and only then the name is coined to locate it. A name unites all that is associated with it and evolves into a complex or, in some extreme cases, into the ‘subject’ of an academic discipline. From among many tentative designations one will eventually rise to plausibility.95

To reconstruct the motives, pretensions, causes and accidents that are involved in such processes is an indispensable part of the historical semantics of modern China.

---

### Table 1: Chinese translations of ‘logic’: a chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chinese term</th>
<th>Literal retranslation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>luorijia (luoriga)</td>
<td>落日加 ---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>mingbian zhi dao</td>
<td>明辨之道 the way of lucid discernment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>luorijia (luoriga)</td>
<td>落日伽 ---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>bian shifei zhi fa 辨是非之法</td>
<td>the method of discerning right/true from wrong/false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>mingli 名理</td>
<td>the patterns of names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>mingli tan 名理探</td>
<td>the exploration of the patterns of names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>mingli (zhi) xue 名理（之）学</td>
<td>the science of the patterns of names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>bianyi 辨艺</td>
<td>ars disputationis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>tailun zhi zongyi 推論之總藝</td>
<td>the general art of inference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>mingbian zhi xue 明辨之學</td>
<td>the science of lucid disputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>tailun (zhi) fa 推論（之）法</td>
<td>the methods of inference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Modern terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chinese term</th>
<th>Literal retranslation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>mingli 明理</td>
<td>elucidating pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>mingli zhi xue 明理之學</td>
<td>the science of elucidating pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>lilun zhi xue 理論之學</td>
<td>the science of organizing arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>si zhi fa 思之法</td>
<td>the methods of thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>lixue 理學</td>
<td>the science of pattern, philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>gewu 格物</td>
<td>the investigation of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>minglun zhi fa 明論之法</td>
<td>the methods of elucidating arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>luxi 路際</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>yifa 意法</td>
<td>the methods of intentional thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>luojige 罗吉格</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>bianbo zhi li 辨驳之理</td>
<td>the patterns of refutation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>bianlun zhi dao 辨論之道</td>
<td>the way of reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>bianlun 辨論</td>
<td>reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>bianshixue 辨學</td>
<td>the science of discerning what is true/real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>xuekuo xinsi zhi fa 学識心思之法</td>
<td>the methods of learning to extend one’s thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>bianlifa 辨理法</td>
<td>the methods of disputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>dao 道</td>
<td>the ‘way’, logos, reason</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Chinese translations of ‘logic’: a chronology (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chinese term</th>
<th>Literal retranslation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>tuilunfa</td>
<td>the methods of inference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>si zhi li</td>
<td>the patterns of thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>lunbian lixue</td>
<td>the philosophy of argumentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>libianxue</td>
<td>the science of orderly disputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>bianxue</td>
<td>the science of disputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>mingxue</td>
<td>the science of names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>lujike</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>lunli</td>
<td>reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>lunlixue</td>
<td>the science of reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>luoji</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>luojixue</td>
<td>the science of luoji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>bianxue</td>
<td>the science of disputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>yuanyan</td>
<td>the foundations of words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>laojijia</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>luoji</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>laojike</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>luoqike</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>tuliuxue</td>
<td>the science of inference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>sixiang gongli zhixue</td>
<td>the science of the general laws of thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>sixiangxue</td>
<td>the science of thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>luoji</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>luoji</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>luoji</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>laojie</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>lilun</td>
<td>organized argumentation, theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>silixue</td>
<td>the science of the patterns of thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>lize</td>
<td>the rules of reason(-ing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>lizexue</td>
<td>the science of the rules of reason(-ing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>siweishu</td>
<td>the art of thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>bianlunshu</td>
<td>the art of reasoning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>