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SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SOURCES
OF THE *MASHI WENTONG*

Reflections on language have a very long history in China. They reach as far back as the Warring States Period (480–221 BC). Some important observations on the nature of language can be found in *Xunzi* 荀子 (third century BC). Later on, during each period of Chinese history, very elaborated dictionaries as well as studies in phonology, dialectology or prosody (on rhymes) came into being: the *Erya* 爾雅 (third century BC), the *Fangyan* 方言 (first century AD), the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (second century AD), the *Shiming* 釋名 (c. 200 AD), the *Yupian* 玉篇 (547–549), the *Qieyun* 切韻 (601), the *Guangyun* 廣韻 (1008), the *Zhongyuan yinyun* 中原音韻 (1324), the *Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典 (1716), etc.

However, there has always been a lacuna in the Chinese tradition which persisted until the nineteenth century; reflections about grammar have been practically non-existent. They are limited to some scattered unsystematic analyses which can be found in the following works: *Wenze* 文則 (1170) by Chen Kui 陳騏 (1128–1203), *Yuzhu* 語助 (1311) by Lu Yiwei 盧以緯 (precise dates unknown), *Zhuzi bianlüe* 助字辨略 (1711) by Liu Qi 劉淇 (precise dates unknown), *Xuzi shuo* 虛字說 (1710) by Yuan Renlin 袁仁林 (precise dates unknown) and *Jingzhuan shici* 經傳釋詞 (1798) by Wang Yinzhi 王引之 (1766–1834).¹

It was not before 1898 that the first grammar of the Chinese language edited by a Chinese was published, the *Mashi wentong* 馬氏文通 (Basic principles for writing clearly and coherently by Mister Ma) by Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1844–1900).² Although relying heavily on Chinese traditions, this grammar is clearly designed like a Western

¹ All these works are readily available in re-editions. Cf. Chen Kui 陳騏 . 1960. *Wenze* 文則 . Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe; Lu Yiwei 盧以緯 . 1988. *Yuzhu* 語助 . Beijing: Zhonghua shuju; Liu Qi 劉淇 . 1954. *Zhuzi bianlüe* 助字辨略 . Beijing: Zhonghua shuju; Yuan Renlin . 1989. *Xuzi shuo* 虛字說 . Beijing: Zhonghua shuju; Wang Yinzhi 王引之 . 1984. *Jingzhuan shici* 經傳釋詞 . Changsha: Yuelu shushe.

² Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 . 1898. *Mashi wentong* 馬氏文通 (Basic principles for writing clearly and coherently by Mister Ma). Reprinted Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan 1983.

grammar. It was written using equivalent works on Indo-European languages as a model.

A brief description of these similarities will be made in part three of this paper where I will try to show that the *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* (better known under the name of *Grammaire de Port-Royal*)³, dating from 1660, inspired the *Mashi wentong* to a considerable extent.

Before this, I will present some Western grammars of the Chinese language which could also have served as a model for the *Mashi wentong*. In fact, even though there was no Chinese scholar writing a grammar of the Chinese language before 1898, early Western missionaries or sinologists compiled several books from the sixteenth century onwards. These works, of which no exhaustive list exists as yet, are true fountains of all kinds of precious knowledge about the Chinese languages (Mandarin and dialects) of the last centuries. Here, I will only present the most important ones:

- (1) *Arte de la lengua mandarina* by Francisco Varo (published in Canton in 1703)⁴;
- (2) *Notitia Linguae Sinicae* by Joseph de Prémare (1728, but published for the first time in Malacca in 1831)⁵;
- (3) *Clavis Sinica* by Joshua Marshman (published in Serampore in 1814)⁶;
- (4) *A Grammar of the Chinese Language* by Robert Morrison (Serampore, 1815)⁷;
- (5) *Elemens de la grammaire chinoise* by Jean Pierre Abel-Rémusat (Paris, 1822)⁸;
- (6) *Chinesische Grammatik* by Georg von der Gabelentz (Leipzig, 1881).⁹

³ Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot. 1660. *Grammaire générale et raisonnée*. Reprinted Paris: Editions Allia 1997.

⁴ Francisco Varo. 1703. *Arte de la lengua mandarina*. Canton. Cf. id. 2000. *Grammar of the Mandarin Language (1703). An English Translation of Arte de la lengua mandarina*. Edited by W. South Coblin and Joseph A. Levi. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

⁵ Joseph Henri de Prémare. 1831. *Notitia Linguae Sinicae*. Malacca: Cura-Academia Anglo-Sinensis.

⁶ Joshua Marshman. 1814. *Clavis Sinica*. Serampore: Mission Press.

⁷ Robert Morrison. 1815. *A Grammar of the Chinese Language*. Serampore: Mission Press.

⁸ Jean Pierre Abel-Rémusat. 1822. *Elemens de la grammaire chinoise*. Paris: Imprimerie Royale. Reprinted Paris: Ala Production 1987.

⁹ Georg von der Gabelentz. 1881. *Chinesische Grammatik*. Leipzig: Weigel.

1. WESTERN GRAMMARS BEFORE THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The most ancient grammar really deserving this name is the *Arte de la lengua mandarina* by father Francisco Varo. It was printed in Canton in 1703 with wooden blocks. It is written in Spanish and does not give any Chinese characters. The author, a Dominican missionary, devoted this grammar exclusively to the description of the rules of the vernacular language of his time. It is not a grammar of Classical Chinese. If one leaves out the remarks on the pronunciation as well as considerations on Chinese habits and customs, which are explained in some detail, only some 30 pages remain that can be regarded as a grammar in the narrow sense of the word. These were modelled on the famous Latin grammar *Introductiones Latinae* (1481) by Elio Antonio Nebrija (1441–1522)¹⁰, a grammar for pedagogical use influenced by the tradition of Italian humanism. It cannot be excluded either that the author was acquainted with the Spanish grammar *Gramática de la lengua castellana* (1492)¹¹, although the latter was not re-edited before the eighteenth century.

The Latin grammar by Nebrija is considered by some historians of linguistics as the first real grammar. As a matter of fact, from a purely terminological point of view, we can find in this treatise most of the linguistic terms which have been taken up later by the different Latin *artes* and which are still used today.¹²

This certainly explains why the author wanted to mold the Chinese language after Indo-European languages, without accounting for its special features. He explains, for example, declinations and cases; terms which do not really apply to the Chinese language. The grammar is organized in the following way:

After discussing the Chinese pronunciation and especially the tones (chapter 2), the author treats the declination of nouns and pro-

¹⁰ Elio Antonio Nebrija. 1481. *Introductiones Latinae*. Reprinted Salamanca: Universidad, 1981.

¹¹ Elio Antonio Nebrija. 1492. *Gramática de la lengua castellana*. Reprinted Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispanica, 1992.

¹² Others consider Dionysios Trax's (second century BC) *Thekhne* to be the first systematic grammar in the Western tradition, but this book only deals with word morphology. It is remarkable that not until Appolonius Dyscolus (second century) the study of syntax was added to grammar (*Grammatici Graeci*), later developed by a Latin grammarian from Constantinople, Priscien, in his book *Institutiones grammaticales* (fifth century).

nouns as well as the cases and the plural in chapter 3, nouns and adjectives in chapter 4 where we also find the comparative and superlative constructions. Chapter 5 contains verbs, diminutives, frequentatives, names of profession and gender. Chapter 6 is again devoted to pronouns, this time the demonstrative, relative and reciprocal ones.

Chapter 7 deals with the following topics: interjections, conjunctions, negations, interrogatives, conditionals; chapter 8 with the verb and its conjugation. Chapter 9 is devoted to the passive construction, and chapter 10 to prepositions and adverbs. This chapter is the most elaborate one. It contains an important list of adverbs with translations and examples listed in alphabetic order (according to the Spanish language). Chapter 11, consisting of only a few pages, treats the formation of sentences, and chapter 12 the numbers. Finally, chapter 13 is entitled “various particles”.

The *Notitia linguae sinicae* by father Joseph de Prémare (1666–1735) is written in Latin. It covers both Classical Chinese and the vernacular. Different rules are given for each. In addition, numerous examples—no less than 12,000—are provided. The rhetorical nature of this grammar is worth noting. The author discusses style and figures of composition in great detail. Nevertheless, genuine grammatical remarks and explanations of sentences remain sparse. What is missing in this vast compilation of specific observations is a level of generalization.

The author uses the same terminology for the first part on Classical Chinese as for the second part on the vernacular language. Moreover, in the examples given, the distinction between the two registers is not always clear.

Prémare takes the *littera* (Chinese *zi* 字) as the basic grammatical units. He counts 487 sounds (*soni*) and four tones (*accenti*), forming 1,445 syllables (*voces*). In the following parts he adopts the traditional Chinese division into ‘full words’ and ‘empty words’ only to divide them into Western parts of speech: nominals (nouns and adjectives), for which he distinguishes different cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, vocative, ablative), pronouns, verbs (copula, auxiliaries, active/passive, etc.), adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, particles. Tense and mood are treated in the chapter on verbs. Little is written about syntax in this book.

The content of the book reveals quite clearly that Prémare, like Varo before him, took the Latin model and applied it to the Chinese

language. Thus, also in his case, linguistic facts often have to be distorted in order to fit his model. Prémare did not try to create a new terminology to account for specific features of the Chinese language, but was satisfied to use the terms he was familiar with from grammars of Latin. Nevertheless, this work—already completed in 1728, but not published before 1831 in Malacca on the initiative of Protestant missionaries—was to have a considerable impact on later grammars.

The *Clavis sinica* by Joshua Marshman and the *Grammar of the Chinese language* by Robert Morrison, published almost simultaneously (in 1814 and 1815, respectively) in Serampore, are less important. In fact, both could better be described as a type of language textbook, introducing the language to the learner by translated examples, rather than a real grammar. The *Clavis sinica* is an expanded version of a precedent book (1809) and focuses on a translation of the *Lunyu* 論語 (Confucius' *Analects*). As a consequence, it is actually an analysis of Classical Chinese based on a single text. The author also gives explanations of a more general nature on social and anthropological phenomena in China which have nothing to do with the language itself.

The Grammar of the Chinese language is even more of a language guide for foreigners. In fact, since the author's arrival in China, he was eager to collect the Chinese equivalents of common English sentences useful for conversation. The book may have been useful for translating English into Chinese, but it cannot be considered as an authentic grammar in the sense that it would provide any rules for the Chinese language.

The *Elemens de la grammaire chinoise* by Jean Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788–1832) was published for the first time in 1822 and a second time in 1857. This is the first attempt at a logical synthesis and well-reasoned construction of the Chinese language. For a very long time it served as a reference work, at least until the *Grammaire Mandarine* (1856) by Antoine Bazin¹³ (1799–1863) and especially the *Syntaxe nouvelle de la langue chinoise* (1869–1870) by Stanislas Julien¹⁴ (1797–1873) appeared, the latter being the most brilliant student of

¹³ Antoine Pierre Louis Bazin. 1856. *Grammaire Mandarine*. Paris: Imprimerie Imperiale.

¹⁴ Stanislas Julien. 1870. *Syntaxe nouvelle de la langue chinoise*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.

Abel-Rémusat and the unchallenged master of European sinology in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Following the example of the grammar by Prémare, which served as a guide for the *Elemens*, Abel-Rémusat distinguishes carefully between Classical or literary Chinese and the vernacular (*guanhua* 官話). The two languages are treated in two different sections: “Style antique” and “Style moderne”.

These are both arranged in the same way, according to the parts of speech in the following order: substantives/nouns, adjectives, names (this sub-chapter is missing from the section “Style moderne”), numbers, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions, interjections, particles and idioms.

Unlike previous grammars, Abel-Rémusat did not try to impose any of the common categories of Indo-European languages on the Chinese languages he described. Rather, he took into account the characteristics of the Chinese language and did not hesitate to say that Chinese nouns do not have gender or case, nor is there any conjugation of the verb.

It remains to be said that the part on Classical Chinese is rather meager (only some lines on prepositions and conjunctions, hardly more on adverbs) and that the book is valuable mainly because of the analyses of the vernacular which are much better represented.

This is not the case with the *Chinesische Grammatik* (1881) by Georg von der Gabelentz, which is a much more complete grammar of Classical Chinese, doubtlessly the best from the end of the nineteenth century. It contains an analysis of the parts of speech listed in the grammars discussed above, but it also gives explanations on their syntactic function (subject, predicate, object, etc.) and the structural principles of the language (inversions, modalities).

2. THE WENTONG AND ITS SOURCES

Let us now turn to the *Mashi wentong* and its sources. The book, as V. H. Mair once said, is quite impenetrable and incomprehensible,¹⁵

¹⁵ Cf. Victor H. Mair. 1997. “Ma Jianzhong and the Invention of Chinese Grammar”, in: Chaofen Sun (ed.). *Studies on the History of Chinese Syntax*. Berkeley: Journal of Chinese Linguistics (Monograph Series, no. 10), pp. 5–26; 10.

and it would be a nightmare to try and translate it into English or any other Western language.

1. Summary of the content of the *Wentong*

The *Wentong* has already been analyzed several times.¹⁶ This is not astonishing, because it had a strong impact on nearly all the grammatical treatises of the twentieth century. The majority of the important linguistic terms of the *Wentong* are still in use today. This is shown in Table 1 comparing the terms of the *Wentong* with those of the *Xiandai Hanyu babai ci* 現代漢語八百詞 (Eight-hundred modern Chinese terms) compiled by Lü Shuxiang et al.¹⁷

Table 1: Linguistic terminology in the *Wentong* and in the *Babai ci*

Wentong		Babai ci	
<i>mingzi</i>	名字	<i>mingci</i>	名詞
		<i>liangci</i>	量詞
<i>daizi</i>	代字	<i>zhidaici</i>	指代詞
<i>dongzi</i>	動字	<i>dongci</i>	動詞
<i>jingzi</i>	靜字	<i>xingrongci</i>	形容詞
		<i>shuci</i>	數詞
		<i>fangweici</i>	方位詞
<i>zhuangzi</i>	狀字	<i>fuci</i>	副詞
<i>jiezi</i>	介字	<i>jieci</i>	介詞
<i>lianzi</i>	連字	<i>lianci</i>	連詞
<i>zhuzi</i>	助字	<i>zhuci</i>	助詞
<i>tanzi</i>	嘆字	<i>tanci</i>	嘆詞
		<i>xiangshengci</i>	象聲詞

At this point, we have to remember that the *Wentong* is divided into three fundamental sections: parts of speech (grammatical categories, labelled *zi* 字), syntactic functions (called *ci* 詞) and positions or cases

¹⁶ Cf., for example, the more recent studies by Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 and Wang Haifen 王海芬 . 1986. *Mashi wentong duben* 馬氏文通讀本 (*Mashi wentong* reader). Shanghai: Jiaoyu chubanshe; and Wang Haifen 王海芬 . 1991. *Mashi wentong yu Zhongguo yufaxue* 馬氏文通與中國語法學 (*Mashi wentong* and Chinese grammar studies). Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe.

¹⁷ Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 et al. 1981. *Xiandai Hanyu babai ci* 現代漢語八百詞 (Eight-hundred modern Chinese terms). Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan.

(called *ci* 次). This final part is certainly very innovative. It has been introduced as an imitation of Western grammars and cannot be found in later Chinese grammars. Another original feature of the *Wentong* is the distinction between *ju* 句 and *dou* 讀, a distinction which is not always very clear, but corresponds in many cases to the modern distinction between sentence (*juzi* 句子) and clause (*fenju* 分句).

Two kinds of sources can easily be identified for the *Wentong*. The author was influenced by the Chinese linguistic tradition on the one hand, but also very much by the Western models of analyzing European languages on the other. He admitted this several times in his prefaces, and especially in his second preface, translated by V. H. Mair, where he wrote:

When I compare texts in these languages [Western languages], I observe that their words are of different categories and that they are governed by sentences. There are fixed rules for enunciating what is in the mind and for forming one's thoughts. From this, I reasoned that the chief principles regulating our classics, histories, philosophers, and miscellaneous writings would be the same. Consequently, I applied these common factors to create a similar set of rules for Chinese. That is how this book came into being.¹⁸

Later on, he explains more precisely: “This book seeks to find in our classical texts those points which are similar or dissimilar to the pre-existent rules of Western writing.” And he is even more explicit on his aims in the “Introduction” (*liyan* 例言):

The chief purpose of the book is to discuss the clause and the sentence. Clauses and sentences, however, are made up of an assemblage of words [he calls them ‘graphs’]. A word must have its proper position in a clause or sentence; to complement each other, the words must fit in various categories. ... These categories of words, the clause, the sentence were not discussed in ancient books. As a result, there were also no names in ancient times for categories of words or for the order of their placement in the sentence.¹⁹

Ma Jianzhong called his book a *Grammar*: “[t]his book would be called a *gelangma* 葛郎瑪 [term used to render the word ‘grammar’ or ‘grammaire’] ... Each country has its own grammar, the general drift of which resembles the grammars of other countries.” Then, Ma stated explicitly: “This book was written in imitation of a Western

¹⁸ Translation adapted from Mair 1997, p. 12.

¹⁹ Translation adapted from *ibid.*, p. 15.

grammar” (*ci shu xi fang gelangma er zuo* 此書系仿葛郎瑪而作). In the following, I will discuss the two sources (Chinese tradition and Western influence) of inspiration for the *Wen tong*.

2. *The influence of the Chinese tradition*

Ma Jianzhong was shaped by traditional Chinese scholarship. He could have written a grammar of spoken Chinese, but he chose to analyze the Classical Chinese language. If we follow He Jiuying 何九盈 in dividing traditional studies of Chinese into two major categories, philology and etymology (*xunguxue* 訓詁學, comments on explanations found in old dictionaries and old writings) and stylistics (*xiucixue* 修辭學, normative use of language for ease of literary compositions)²⁰, we find that Ma Jianzhong was certainly familiar with both traditions and made use of both of them in the *Mashi wentong*. In particular, from the *xiucixue* tradition, we can discover traces of the grammatical analyses and terms in the works by Chen Kui, Lu Yiwei and Yuan Renlin already mentioned above.

Amongst others, he thus borrowed from this tradition the following terms: *ming* 名, *dong* 動, *ju* 句 and *dou* 讀 as well as the fundamental distinction between *xuzi* 虛字 ‘empty words’ and *shizi* 實字 ‘full words’. In many cases, however, he borrowed the terms but gave them new meanings.

The author likewise had a profound knowledge of the *xunguxue* tradition, e.g. the works of Liu Qi and Wang Yinzhi mentioned above. But in these cases, he made much more use of their analyses than of their terminology. The influence of the Western grammatical tradition remains still the strongest.

3. *Western influence on the Mashi wentong*

Western influence on the *Wentong* could potentially have come from two directions: previous Western grammars of Chinese on the one hand and grammars of Indo-European languages on the other hand. Ma Jianzhong, who was not only educated in a Jesuit school, but also spent some time in France (1875/76–1880) and could read Greek and Latin as well as French and English, had plenty of opportunities to come in contact with both.

²⁰ He Jiuying 何九盈 . 1985. *Zhongguo gudai yuyanxue shi* 中國古代語言學史 (A history of linguistics in ancient China). Henan: Henan renmin chubanshe, p. 193.

The question of the true model of the *Mashi wentong* has intrigued many scholars, Chinese and Western. Ma Jianzhong himself does not give any hint in his book. Apart from the general statement that the *Wentong* is modelled on *gelangma*, no particular grammar is mentioned throughout the book that could be a candidate.

Xu Guozhang 許國璋 compares the *Wentong* with the Latin grammar by Albert Harkness (1883)²¹ and the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* (the more common name of the *Grammaire générale et raisonnée*”, given by Arnauld and Lancelot) mentioned above.²² He concludes that none of the two could possibly have served as a model for the *Wentong*. Peter Peverelli thinks that the *English Grammar* by Henry Sweet (1892)²³ and also Prémare’s Chinese grammar did influence the *Wentong*, but not enough to be qualified as true “models”.²⁴

Wang Haifen thinks that the *Wentong* “shows obvious traces of imitating Western grammars”; nevertheless, she hastens to add: “But these points of imitation can only be found in some concrete problems, they do not occupy a major position in the book as a whole, not even an important one.”²⁵ Finally, Chen Guohua, after comparing the *Wentong* and the *Grammaire de Port-Royal*, draws the conclusion that “the *Wentong* is definitely not a logic and universal grammar in the fashion of the Grammar of Port-Royal”.²⁶ He nevertheless admits that “the *Wentong* is a grammar of Ancient Chinese not in the strictest sense of the word, taking the *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* as theoretical foundation, imitating the organization of Western grammars and paying ample attention to the specific features of the Chinese language”.²⁷

In the following, I will examine the most likely candidates from each of the possible sources of influence, the Western grammars on Chinese and the Indo-European grammars.

²¹ Albert Harkness. 1883. *A Latin Grammar for Schools and Colleges*. New York: D. Appleton & Company.

²² Xu Guozhang 許國璋. 1991. *Lun yuyan 論語言* (On language). Beijing: Waiyan she, pp. 83–9.

²³ Henry Sweet. 1892. *New English Grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

²⁴ Peter Peverelli. 1986. *The History of Modern Chinese Grammar Studies*. Ph.D. diss., Leiden University.

²⁵ Wang Haifen 1991, p. 199.

²⁶ Chen Guohua 陳國華. 1997. “*Putong weili yufa he Mashi wentong*” 普通唯理語法和馬氏文通 (*The Grammaire générale et raisonnée* and the *Mashi wentong*), *Guowai yuyanxue* 3, pp. 1–11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

4. Chinese grammars written by Western scholars

It is hard to believe that Varo's *Arte de la lengua mandarina* should have had any influence on Ma Jianzhong. Moreover, by the nineteenth century, the book had already become very rare.²⁸ It is likely that Ma did not have access to it at all. None of the analyses in the *Arte* that are of any originality can be found in the *Wentong*.

The same is true of the *Clavis sinica* by Marshman (1814) and the *Grammar of the Chinese language* by Morrison (1815), which seem to have been inaccessible for Ma Jianzhong, or, if he had indeed used them, this is not reflected in his book.

It is safe to state that Ma Jianzhong did not know the *Chinesische Grammatik*. If he did, the *Wentong* would certainly be much different in the analyses of different problems. Actually, the *Chinesische Grammatik* was not published before 1881, when Ma Jianzhong had already returned to China. Moreover, the grammar is written in German, a language that Ma was not familiar with. Thus, the only remaining candidates are the grammars by Prémare (1728) and by Abel-Rémusat (1822).

Peverelli is doubtlessly right in stating that the *Notitia linguae sinicae* by Prémare certainly influenced the *Wentong*. This grammar was probably the first Ma ever came into contact with when he was a student at the Jesuit college Saint Ignace in Shanghai, long before he was sent to France between 1875/76 and 1880. We know that it was used as a reference work by the Jesuits teaching at the college. In fact, it is not difficult to find features that the two books have in common, especially in their organization.

Like Prémare, Ma takes the *zi* (*littera*) as the basic grammatical unit, and like Prémare, he adopts the traditional division into 'full' and 'empty' words to divide them into Western parts of speech.

It is also very likely that Ma Jianzhong was familiar with the work of Abel-Rémusat, as the new edition of 1857 was very widely distributed in Europe. Ma certainly had access to that grammar when he was in Paris between 1875/6 and 1880. The influence of this grammar on the *Wentong* is nevertheless negligible, first of all, because the part on Classical Chinese is not very elaborated in the *Elemens*, whereas it is the main topic of the *Wentong*, but also because the perspective of Ma Jianzhong is somewhat opposed to that of Abel-Rémusat. The latter

²⁸ Cf. Abel-Rémusat 1822.

wanted to avoid applying grammatical rules valid for Western grammars to the Chinese language, whereas Ma Jianzhong, believing in Universal Grammar, was trying to find what was similar in Western and Chinese syntax.

5. *Grammars of Indo-European languages*

Actually, when Ma Jianzhong speaks of the model of Western grammars, what he has in mind are obviously grammars on Western languages written by Western scholars. I would like to put forward the following hypothesis: among all the grammars that Ma Jianzhong could have had at his disposition, it is likely that the *Grammaire de Port Royal* exerted the largest influence on him, as it had influenced the vast majority of Western linguists until the nineteenth century, before the theories of comparative grammar (*bijiao yufa* 比較語法) gained ground in the West. Franz Bopp and his *Conjugationssystem* is dated to 1816, but his theories were not widely known in France before 1866, and even at this time, somebody like Bréal was still defending the legitimacy of the “Grammaire générale et philosophique de Port-Royal” in reaction to the hegemony of German universities. The situation was, of course, different in Germany where the *Grammaire générale* was attacked.

We know, for example, that there were six editions of the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* between 1803 and 1846 in Paris, where it was known as ‘la Grammaire’. It is therefore not impossible that Ma Jianzhong was thinking of a particular grammar when he wrote: *ci shu xi fang gelangma er zuo*, which would then be the *Grammaire de Port-Royal*. This hypothesis is based on the fact that the philosophical systems of the two grammars are quite similar, as Chen Guohua already noticed. There is no doubt that Ma’s aim was to write a ‘grammaire générale’.²⁹

²⁹ ‘Grammaire générale’ means ‘Universal grammar’ (UG). The term ‘général’ has been fixed in France, especially since Nicolas de Beauzée. 1767. *Grammaire Générale ou exposition raisonnée des éléments nécessaires du langage pour servir de fondements à l’étude de toutes les langues*. Paris: Barbou. Very few French linguists at that time would have used the term ‘Grammaire universelle’, an exception being Antoine Court de Gébelin. 1816. *Histoire naturelle de la parole ou grammaire universelle*. Paris: Plancher, Eymery & Delaunay. In England, on the contrary, the word ‘général’ was rare, the common term being ‘Universal grammar’ (*grammatica universalis*). In Germany, the word used was ‘allgemein’, meaning both ‘universal’ and ‘général’, something like the Chinese term *putong* 普通 ‘common’.

Table 2 in the Appendix, comparing the terms used in the two books, also shows that there are numerous similarities at this level, even for notions that do not exist *a priori* in the Chinese language like for example, relative pronouns. These similarities could hardly have come about by mere chance.

In conclusion, I think that the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* has been the main source of the *Wentong*, and it is not impossible that when Ma wrote “this book was written in imitation of (a) Western grammar(s)”, he was thinking of a particular and unique grammar, the *Grammaire de Port-Royal*.

APPENDIX

Table 2: Linguistic Terminology used in the Mashi wentong, the Grammaire de Port-Royal and in Modern Chinese

<i>Mashi wentong</i>		<i>Grammaire de Port-Royal</i>		<i>Modern Chinese term</i>
1. Parts of speech (zi 字)				
名字	<i>mingzi</i>	substantif	名詞	<i>mingci</i>
– 公名	<i>gongming</i>	général	– 普通名詞	<i>putong mingci</i>
– 群名	<i>qunming</i>	collectif	– 集合	<i>jihe</i>
– 通名	<i>tongming</i>	adjectif	– 抽象名詞	<i>chouxiang mingci</i>
– 本名	<i>benming</i>	nom propre	– 專有名詞	<i>zhuanyou mingci</i>
代字	<i>daizi</i>	pronom	代詞	<i>daici</i>
– 發語者	<i>fayuzhe</i>	première personne	– 第一人稱	<i>diyì rencheng</i>
– 與語者	<i>yuyuzhe</i>	deuxième personne	– 第二人稱	<i>dier rencheng</i>
– 所謂語者	<i>suoweyuzhe</i>	troisième personne	– 第三人稱	<i>disan rencheng</i>
– 重指代字	<i>chongzhi daizi</i>	réciproque	– 相互代詞	<i>xianghu daici</i>
– 接讀代字	<i>jiedu daizi</i>	relatif	– 關係代詞	<i>guanxi daici</i>
– 詢問代字	<i>xunwen daizi</i>	interrogatif	– 疑問代詞	<i>yiwen daici</i>
– 指示代字	<i>zhishi daizi</i>	démonstratif	– 指示代詞	<i>zhishi daici</i>
靜字	<i>jingzi</i>	adjectif	形容詞	<i>xingrongci</i>
– 象靜	<i>xiangjing</i>	adjectif	– 形容詞	<i>xingrongci</i>
– 滋靜	<i>zijing</i>	nombre	– 數詞	<i>shuci</i>
動字	<i>dongzi</i>	verbe	動詞	<i>dongci</i>
– 外動字	<i>waidongzi</i>	transitif	– 及物動詞	<i>jiwu dongci</i>
– 自反動字	<i>zifandongzi</i>	réciproque	– 相互	<i>xianghu</i>
– 施動	<i>shidong</i>	actif	– 主動	<i>zhudong</i>
– 受動	<i>shoudong</i>	supin	– 被動	<i>beidong</i>
– 內動字	<i>neidongzi</i>	intransitif	– 不及物	<i>bujiwu</i>
– 同動字	<i>tongdongzi</i>	copule	– 系詞	<i>xici</i>
– 助動字	<i>zhudongzi</i>	auxiliaire	– 助動詞	<i>zhudongci</i>
– 無屬動字	<i>wushu dongzi</i>	impersonnel	– 無人稱	<i>wurencheng</i>
– 動字相承	<i>dongzi xiangcheng</i>	infinitif	– 不定式	<i>budingshi</i>
		neutre	中性	<i>zhongxing</i>

Table 2: Linguistic Terminology used in the *Mashi wentong*, the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* and in Modern Chinese (cont.)

<i>Mashi wentong</i>	<i>Grammaire de Port-Royal</i>	<i>Modern Chinese term</i>
1. Parts of speech (<i>zi</i> 字) (cont.)		
狀字	<i>zhuangzi</i>	adverbes 副詞 <i>fuci</i>
介字	<i>jiezi</i>	prépositions 介詞 <i>jieci</i>
連字	<i>lianzi</i>	conjonctions 連詞 <i>lianci</i>
助字	<i>zhuzi</i>	助詞 <i>zhuci</i>
嘆字	<i>tanzi</i>	interjections 感嘆詞 <i>gantanci</i>
2. Syntactic functions (<i>ci</i> 詞)		
詞起	<i>ciqi</i>	sujet 主語 <i>zhuyu</i>
止詞	<i>zhici</i>	objet 賓語 <i>binyu</i>
轉詞	<i>zhuanci</i>	補語? <i>buyu?</i>
表詞	<i>biaoci</i>	attribut 謂項 <i>weixiang</i>
司詞	<i>sici</i>	objet de préposition 介詞賓語 <i>jieci binyu</i>
加詞	<i>jiaci</i>	狀語 <i>zhuangyu</i>
前詞	<i>qianci</i>	antécédent 先行詞語 <i>xianxing ciyu</i>
後詞	<i>houci</i>	後行詞語 <i>houxing ciyu</i>
狀詞	<i>zhuangci</i>	狀語 <i>zhuangyu</i>
3. Positions or cases (<i>ci</i> 次)		
主次	<i>zhuci</i>	nominatif 主格 <i>zhuge</i>
賓次	<i>binci</i>	accusatif 賓格 <i>binge</i>
偏次	<i>pianci</i>	génitif 屬格 <i>shuge</i>
同次	<i>tongci</i>	apposition 同位 <i>tongwei</i>
轉詞	<i>zhuanci</i>	datif (?) 與格 <i>yuge</i>
		vocatif 呼格 <i>(huge)</i>
轉詞	<i>zhuanci</i>	ablatif (?) 奪格 <i>duoge</i>
讀	<i>dou</i>	proposition 分句 <i>fenju</i>
句	<i>ju</i>	phrase 句子 <i>juzi</i>

