
**Vivienne Alleton**

[Viviane Alleton (1930–...) received her PhD from University Paris VI in 1983. She had been Professor («Directrice d'études») at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris) on a Chair untitled «Language, Knowledge and Society in China» from 1991 to 2009. Her researches and publications deal with (1) the grammar of modern Chinese, particularly adverbs, modal verbs, and generally all that correspond to the implication of the speaker into his discourse, (2) Chinese writing system and its representations. Contact: v.all@orange.fr]

The discovery of Chinese logic followed three centuries of attempts to import Western logic. From the beginning of the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century, successive efforts on the part of the Jesuits and Protestants to introduce the notions of logic into China failed to elicit any interest. This situation changed in the early years of the twentieth century, and at the same time, discussion arose over the ancestry of Chinese logic, which was seen to date back more than two millennia. This rediscovery of the neglected aspects of the intellectual history of China pushed Western logic back to second place.

Joachim Kurtz relates this story in great detail, devoting four chapters to the introduction of this science from the West. The fifth chapter deals with the discovery of fragments of logical theorizing in ancient Chinese texts, and the Epilogue focuses on contemporary discourse on the question of a specific "Chinese logic". Along with the history of this "rediscovery", he provides the terminology used at each stage.

The Jesuits produced the first texts introducing European logic in China. Matteo Ricci, in the *Tian zhu shiyi*, "The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven" (1603), used Aristotelian terms from the perspective of Confucian moral philosophy. One example is his translation of "cause" as *suo yi ran* "that by which the things are the way they are". The response to these texts was friendly, the impact nil.

In 1623, Giulio Aleni published the *Xi xue fan* “General Outline of Western Knowledge”, a taxonomy of sciences, including an accessible presentation of logic. Among the collections of books brought from Rome at this time, there was a monumental work in two volumes, *In universam dialecticam Aristotelis*, which offered a clear introduction to contemporary European logic. Francisco Furtado and Li Zhizao teamed up to work on the translation of this text from 1627 to 1629, producing the *Mingli tan*, whose ten scrolls (c. 600 pages) have been preserved. The authors invented
entirely new terminology, with hundreds of neologisms. Although they avoided phonetic borrowings, the quantity of new words was dissuasive. They did not try to adapt any of the ancient Chinese terms, as had been done in some other fields. From this entirely new lexicon, not one word has survived. Lacking any connection to Chinese tradition and with a strong Christian bias, it had a very small number of readers, and few copies were produced.

After the Manchu conquest and the beginning of the Qing dynasty, Ferdinand Verbiest took advantage of his position teaching mathematics and astronomy to the emperor Qian Long to suggest the idea of compiling a Chinese version of European philosophy. The Jesuit spent five years (1678–1683) preparing this book, the Qiong li xue, which was designed as a “trap” for converting the emperor to the Catholic religion. Although this text does not present specific grammatical difficulties, the terminology is opaque for the Chinese reader and the book was perceived as “another missionary ploy” designed to destabilize Chinese canonical writings. The work was soon forgotten.

For two centuries, European logic was not even mentioned in China. The post-Newtonian science presented by the Protestants after 1875 was quite different to what had been tentatively introduced by the Jesuits. The translation of Bacon’s New Organon was received with interest, as there was a desire to open up new horizons, but also with some reluctance, due to the religious context of the presentation and to the implications of the text.

Joseph Edkins provided the first presentation of logic for a wide audience in a “comprehensive biography” of Aristotle for the Peking Magazine. In the 1880s, he was in charge of the translation of a series of Science Primers, including a volume on Logic. He presented logic as one of the three topics of European philosophy, along with physics and ethics, but he did not demonstrate why this discipline presented an interest for the Chinese. The language he used included an entirely new set of expressions, but they were mainly paraphrases. The success of this work was modest. Another important protagonist was John Fryer, a prolific translator. His Lixue xuzhi (1898), “What we know about logic”, did not place logic in the taxonomy of sciences. The discipline was also absent from the theories on the “Chinese origin of Western knowledge” that began to flourish.

After China was defeated in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895, the search for a new order was felt to be urgent. In this context, the most important actor was Yan Fu (1853–1921), who saw logic as a necessary basis for new scientific and political programs, replacing intuitionism and the traditional reliance on ancient texts. He insisted on experimental procedures. In addition to his many other activities (articles in the newspapers, public talks, etc.), this prolific translator published works in
the field of logic: *Tian yan lun* ["On evolution"], *Mule mingxue* [an adaptation of John Stuart Mill’s *System of Logic*], *Mingxue qianshuo* [a translation of William Stanley Jevons’s *Logic Primer*]. These works, which are sometimes more like paraphrases than strict translations, were of little help in understanding logical procedures. However, they raised interest in the topic and, after more than 250 years of indifference, secured a place for logic on China’s intellectual map.

In 1898, logic was introduced to the curriculum of the Imperial University as an elective discipline, and it became part of the Upper Normal Schools’ introductory course in “general education”. Recruiting professors was problematic and the teaching was rudimentary, but the publication of a large number of textbooks translated from Japanese secured a position for logic in the science curriculum. Other scholars contributed to this development, such as Wang Guowei, who, in 1908, provided a new rendition of Jevons, or the Catholics, who added the Buddhist contribution to the picture. One characteristic of the texts dealing with logic published during this period was the widespread presence of graphic and symbolic representations. This use of the symbolic resources found in the Chinese tradition of exegesis, although not standardized, seems to have been efficient.

Within no more than a decade, logic was incorporated as a non-sensitive field, and seen as a methodological tool, either as an ancillary of natural sciences or as an extension of traditional Chinese philology.

The discovery of logical discourse in ancient Chinese texts occurred gradually after 1895. Yan Fu, in his *Tian yanlu* (1898), identified, in the *Shiji*, some references to induction and deduction, and suggested parallels between European logic and Chinese philosophy. However, he did not go further. It was from the year 1880, in Meiji Japan, that more serious discussions were initiated on the subject of “Eastern” contributions to universal philosophical problems and that the term “Chinese logic” was first used. Japanese scholars considered that ancient authors such as Mencius had taken the rules of logic into account without, however, constructing coherent theories.

At the turn of the twenties century, four influential scholars touched upon these issues. Liu Shipei suggested reviving ancient Chinese logic and supplementing it with Western logic. Zhang Bingling focused on the diversity of the Chinese intellectual heritage. He referred to the forms of reasoning in Indian dialectics and compared them to European syllogistic reasoning and to the fragmentary insights preserved in the Mohist canon. Liang Qichao did not consider it necessary to find explicit logical theories: he chose to examine the logical implications in discursive practices. Wang Guowei was the author of a short essay about “The Logic of the Non-
Canonical Masters of the Zhou and Qin Periods” (1905). These four authors agreed on two points: there is explicit evidence of logic in ancient Chinese thought, and the most valuable sources for retrieving it are the Mohists and Xunzi. They diverge, however, about the terminological framework.

Joachim Kurtz limits his presentation to the “age of discovery”. In the 26 pages of his Epilogue, he describes how, shortly before 1900, logic was incorporated into the system of education, and how the discovery of fragments of logical discourse in ancient texts resulted in the invention of an unbroken Chinese tradition. In the first half of the 1930’s, Hu Shi and Zhang Bingling assumed that there was a basic historical continuity from classical Chinese thought to modern logic. Since the properties of names were “a shared concern of all ancient thinkers”, they claimed that Chinese logic had its own identity, blurring the distinction between explicit logical statement and implicit logical structure. After 1949, the impact of Marxist ideology and nationalism resulted in a systematic promotion of particular features of the Chinese tradition. The Academy of Social Sciences was in charge of a large inventory that resulted in a multi-volume anthology which is still in the making. However this Maoist vision did not put a stop to the polemics about the existence of a specific “Chinese” logic. J. Kurtz’s personal point of view is that the “protracted hunt for explicit theories” in de-contextualized fragments is of no use: in his opinion, it is only when we understand how arguments were presented and addressed in every field of science and practice that we will be able to give China its rightful place in intellectual history.

An important feature of this book is the attention J. Kurtz gives to terminology. Throughout the text, he discusses the choice of technical terms and in the appendices (54 pages), he classifies the terms of logic used by the authors in the texts he mentions for each period. The bibliography includes more than 800 entries.

This book is a truly an historical and linguistic achievement. J. Kurtz is the first author to provide such an exhaustive presentation of the progressive introduction of Western views of logic and of the emergence of an exchange of views on “Chinese logic”. The definition he gives of the heritage of logic in Chinese civilisation is of interest and merits discussion.