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About *Ke Nan* 客難

Hiroshi TANIGUCHI, Kyôto University

*Ke Nan* (*Da Ke Nan* 答客難) or *Response to a Guest's Objection*, attributed to Dong-fang Shuo 東方朔, is the first piece of a Han-Wei 漢魏 period literary genre, She-lun 設論 or Hypothetical Discourse. This article attempts to give a suggestion on the origin of She-lun by analysis of *Ke Nan*.

I. Relation between *Ke Nan* and the skill of Warring States persuasion: It is said that Song Yu's 宋玉 *Dui Chu-wang Wen* 對楚王問 or *Response to the Questions of the King of Chu* and some pieces of Qu Yuan 屈原 are the predecessors of *Ke Nan*. But I suppose that the skill of Warring States persuasion, especially that of *Mencius*, has close relation to *Ke Nan*. The hero, Master Dong-fang 東方先生, not only explains his historical position as *Mencius* did, but also uses some words quoted from *Mencius* and other Warring States philosophers. The content, however, says he who is living a peaceful era cannot behave like Warring States persuaders. He also claims the necessity of self-culture by many quotations of old books, which method is an important technique of the Warring States speech. In this case, however, too many quotations result in reveal-

ing uselessness of old books. We can safely say *Ke Nan* is an utter parody of Warring States speech.

II. The historical background of *Ke Nan*: Since the establishment of Han Dynasty, traveling persuaders transferred their attention from Warring States to Han Kingdoms, for example Wu 吳, Liang 梁, and Huainan 淮南 etc. They were admired by common people and Emperor Wu 武帝 also patronized them at the beginning of his reign. But he oppressed these persuaders after his conquest of the Kingdoms. Though there are important questions about the author and the text of *Ke Nan*, these questions are not essential. The essential matter is that *Ke Nan* reflects the atmosphere of Emperor Wu's reign in which the skill of Warring States persuasion becomes useless.

III. Relation between *Ke Nan* and folktales: There are some pieces in the form of response to a person's objection besides *Ke Nan*, for example *Shi Ji biography of fortune-tellers* 史記日者列傳 and *Chapter Thief Zhi* 盜跖篇 in *Zhuang-zi* 莊子. In these pieces, a humble hero talks down high officials or highbrow in a humorous way, not a logic and persuasive one like Warring States persuaders. Moreover, these pieces have a theatrical style, in which the scene of their dialogue and personages' expression are vividly described. I suppose that these pieces developed from folktales or farces, which Ban Gu 班固 called "speaking in the street, telling on the road 街談巷語." *Ke Nan*, especially in its hero's humbleness, is equal to these pieces. The only difference is that Master Dong-fang cannot defeat his opponent. *Ke Nan* is the story that a humble man try to defeat his opponent and to reverse their position in vain. It is essential that the hero of *Ke Nan* is *Dong-fang Shuo*, a notorious fool.

IV. *Ke Nan* and the portrait of Dong-fang Shuo in fables: In *Shi Ji* biography of Dong-fang Shuo, written by Zhu Shao-sun 褚少孫, his indiscreet and foolish behaviors described seems to be released from readers' unconscious desire. Afterwards, he is objected by Doctors in the Court 宮下博士諸先生 who act as a representative of readers, especially the gentry, who adores Warring States persuaders but cannot behave like them. After this "Passion," he foretells a happy event of the Empire and advises the Emperor as if he were "the God." In this biography, it is natural that Dong-fang Shuo's response to doctors' objection is not a fictional literary piece

but an factual incident. On the other hand, in *Han Shu* 漢書 biography, written by Ban Gu, his foolness works a chance for Emperor Wu to take a liking to him. He gave loyal counsel to Emperor Wu in vain, and wrote *Ke Nan* for disappointment. He suffers all alone in this biography. It is suitable that Ban Gu described *Ke Nan* as a literary piece written by Dong-fang Shuo. The story of *Ke Nan* was told in various ways according to the portrait of Dong-fang Shuo that each story-tellers had in mind.

It is meaningless to ask who wrote *Ke Nan*. Which is rather a caricature than a literary piece. It bases on the skill of Warring States persuasion and the frame of folktales. These two elements combined against a background of the end of persuaders' period, by the medium of Dong-fang Shuo, who represented people's sentiment.

### Yang Gui-fei 貴楊妃 Seen by Her Contemporaries :

Mainly on the Device of Comparison in the

Poems of Li Bai 李白 and Du Fu 杜甫

Tetsuhiko TOSAKI, Shiga University

Since the Heian period, Yang Gui-fei has been regarded by the Japanese people with considerable favor as a woman of peerless beauty and a heroine of the tragic romance with Xuan-zong Huang-di 玄宗皇帝. This tendency goes beyond the fields of literature and entertainment. In its extreme, the admiration for beautiful Yang Gui-fei has even made her an object of worship as a Bosatsu or Kan-non.

In China, however, Yang Gui-fei generally does not seem to have been very popular with the public. This was certainly true in the Tang 唐 dynasty when she lived. The purpose of this paper is to examine, through the study of the poems of Li Bai and Du Fu, what kind of figure Yang Gui-fei cut among her contemporaries.

The most noticeable aspect of the poems on Yang Gui-fei is that both of these poets compare her to Zhao Fei-yan 趙飛燕 and Xi Wang-

mu 西王母, celebrated beauties who enthralled their emperors. Yet there have been many other women figures, both historical and mythic, who were beautiful and famous for their romance with emperors; why did the poets choose these two specific women as the historical / mythic counterparts of Yang Gui-fei? The answer lies in the duplicity of their characters. Both of these women were physically beautiful, but spiritually they were ugly and corrupt. By likening Yang Gui-fei to these two women, therefore, Li Bai and Du Fu intended implicitly to criticize her ugly mind, while on the surface they admired her beauty. What struck the poets as ugly in these women was, in short, their seductive and lewd character.

By their ingenious comparisons, the poems of Li Bai and Du Fu hint and satirize that Yang Gui-fei, utilizing this unsavory character, captivated the emperor, gained control of political power, and thus exerted a destructive influence on government administration. Such a satiric approach began with Li Bai, and was taken over by Du Fu. Li Bai's view of Yang Gui-fei was based on his own experiences in the Court. So it may be safe to believe that, in his association with Li Bai, Du Fu learned not only the poetics, but also the court experiences, of Li Bai.

## Conscious Activity [II]—the historical studies of Wang Guo-wei (王國維)

Ryōichi INAMI, Shiga University

Generally speaking, the studies of Wang Guo-wei are divided into two periods of time, which is before or after the Xin-hai Ge-ming (辛亥革命). Before Xin-hai Ge-ming, he was considered to be the vanguard of the new era, trying to change the status quo in China. During this period of time, he felt a strong interest on the problem of "universal" in the field of philosophy and literature. On the other hand, in "*Song Yuan Xi Qu Kao*" (宋元戲曲考) which was regarded to be his best work, he tried to search for the essence of literature. In both cases, he refused to use a quick and easy method just to solve the present occasion.

After Xin-hai Ge-ming, he turned to study ancient Chinese history. In his research, he was particular about trivial facts and developed many theories which was criticized as not concerning with the status quo in China. However, this change did not mean that he had shut himself away in the field of ancient China. In many writings on Yin Zhou (殷周) and the Western Regions (西域), such as “*Liu Sha Zhui Jian*” (流沙墜簡), “*Yin Xu Shu Qi Kao Shi* (殷墟書契考釋)”, “*Yin Bu Ci Zhong Suo Jian Xian Wang Xian Gong Kao*” (殷卜辭中所見先王先公考), “*Meng Gu Kao*” (萌古考), he confirmed to the idea that the development of Chinese culture had no limits. This is nothing but his fundamental standpoint relating to China. Wang Guo-wei regarded the historical change as inevitable, which meant various attempts to create a new social system and tradition. Moreover, he based on this idea to take a new look at the past history of China. The comparison of excavated articles and well-known documents formed a new connection among each age. Therefore, Chinese history was no longer just a passage of time; but has great impacts on many preconceived ideas.

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#### MISCELLANEOUS :

- Visits to Ding Ling’s country  
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#### SELECTIVE ABSTRACT OF RECENT WORKS