

**From Pattern to ‘Culture’?:
Emergence and Transformations of Metacultural *Wén***

by

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DEDICATION

To Bill

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I trace (i) the emergence and different stages of the use of the term *wén* in pre-Qín texts to refer to language-specific conceptualizations of ‘conventionalized behavior’ and (ii) the emergence of the use of the English term *culture* as a translation the term *wén* and as an analytical concept in discussions of ‘cultural identity’ in early China. I do so by proposing a linguistic anthropological approach to the study of historical changes in collectively shared conceptualizations of ‘conventionalized behavior’ through lexical changes in text corpora. Combining theories of metaculture with theories of lexicalization enables me to analyze pre-Qín concepts of ‘tradition’ or ‘culture’ as language-specific metacultural concepts which are anchored in particular historical contexts.

This dissertation contributes to our understanding of the term *wén* in three ways. First, I argue that metacultural uses of *wén* did not exist in the pre-Zhànguó period. At that time when *wén* was used to refer to positive attributes of individuals of noble rank, it meant ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful.’ This use of *wén* derived from more the basic meaning ‘decorative pattern’ through processes of metaphorical extension and abstraction. This dissertation thereby offers new insight into the social importance of externally visible beauty in early Zhōu society by proposing that pre-Zhànguó uses of *wén* referred to physical appearance rather than acquired moral traits (as proposed in the Chinese commentarial tradition).

Second, I argue that metacultural uses of *wén* referring to the abstract concept of ‘(patterns in) conventionalized behavior’ developed in the Zhànguó period (481-221 BCE) from

the earlier meaning of ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful.’ By providing a chronology of these changes, I avoid the anachronistic interpretations of *wén* which originated in the Chinese commentarial tradition and which have continued to influence the way scholars translate the term to the present day.

Third, I show that the wide-spread assumption that *wén* means ‘culture’ is a relatively recent phenomenon that owes more to the increasing popularity of the term *culture* in the English language over the last two centuries than to a deepening of our understanding of the pre-Qín metacultural concept referred to by the term *wén*.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Lexicalized Metaculture as Historical Problem

Texts and documents are the primary source material used by historians. Indeed history is distinguished from prehistory primarily by the advent of writing and the emergence of historical records.¹ To a large extent, historical research consists in extracting information about the past from written sources.² Anchoring each text within its historical context is a crucial step in this process of textual archaeology. Who composed a given text? When, where, why and for what audience was it written?

In this chapter I will outline a methodology which uses the *lexicon*, rather than individual *texts*, as a historical source. The lexicon is the shared vocabulary of a community of individuals communicating in the same language. The lexicon changes over time in response to changes in the larger historical context. For example, new words may enter the language as loan words from other languages when new technologies or new ideas are introduced from other areas. New terms may also be coined by native speakers themselves to express new concepts in different aspects of their world, such as changes in administrative institutions or social hierarchies. In other words, diachronic changes in the lexicon are a reflection of epistemic changes in worldview or in

¹ The term *prehistoric* is usually defined as referring to "relating to, dating from, or designating the time before written historical records" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition 2001). Conversely, history tends to be defined as the period after the introduction of written historical records. Since historical records can exist in the form of orally transmitted records of the past even before the introduction of the technology of writing, the dividing line between history and prehistory does not necessarily have to coincide with the emergence of writing. For more discussion of these issues, see Carr (1961).

² This does not mean that historical research cannot use non-linguistic sources drawn from fields such as archaeology, geology, etc.

collectively shared conceptual frameworks. Hence, the lexicon is a valuable source in studies of changes in thought and society.

Using vocabulary changes to bolster historical analyses is not a new idea.³ However, the theoretical implications of using the lexicon as a historical source are rarely spelled out. Just as a single text needs to be contextualized when used as a historical source, so do we also need to contextualize the lexicon and lexical change. Who used this shared vocabulary? In what socio-political context did the need for coining new words for new ideas emerge? In other words, what we need is a theoretical framework which allows us to formulate hypotheses about the connections between lexical changes on the one hand, and thought and society on the other. Such a framework can be constructed by explicitly integrating theories of lexical change with theories from other disciplines that study the areas of different sub-vocabularies. In this chapter, I propose a new framework which integrates theories of lexicalization with anthropological theories of metaculture and thereby allows us to use the lexicon as a source in historical studies of pre-Qín conceptualizations of the semantic field to which the Modern English concept of ‘culture’ belongs.

Lexicalization is the process of adopting new words into the lexicon. People coin or borrow new terms for new concepts in response to changes in their physical or intellectual environment. Lexicalization thus functions as an umbilical cord linking language to society. It therefore plays a pivotal role in our effort to contextualize the lexicon as a historical source. The diachronic process of lexicalization always takes place in a specific historical context. It is a

³ Attempts at reconstructing the religion, society, and physical environment of the speakers of the vocabulary of Proto-Indo-European illustrate another use of the lexicon as a historical source. However, since the Indo-European vocabulary is by its very nature the result of a highly abstract process of linguistic comparison of languages spread out over several continents and spanning a time period of several millennia, it is very difficult to contextualize. Nevertheless, in spite of the speculative nature of such studies (see for example Benveniste and Lallot (1969) and Martinet (1986)) they still illustrate how a reconstructed vocabulary can, in principle, be used as a source in the study of the prehistoric period.

highly context-sensitive process of prepackaging reality into discrete culture-specific concepts associated with language-specific terms. Heightened attention to the context- and language-specific nature of lexicalization is also important in that it alerts us to hermeneutical problems related to use of modern English analytical categories, such as the concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘customs’ (which are highly idiosyncratic, language-specific conceptualizations), in the study of reality-constituting concepts of pre-modern societies.

This dissertation will propose an analysis of the changes in the shared conceptualizations of Zhōu elite ‘culture’ that took place during the five centuries from the Chūnqiū period (770-481 BCE) to the end of the Zhànguó period (481-221 BCE).⁴ I do so by integrating theories of lexicalization with theories of metaculture. This approach will allow me to answer the following questions:⁵ What can the historical process of lexicalization of a specific pre-Qín conceptualization of ‘culture’ during the Zhànguó period tell us about the shared conceptual framework of conventionalized behavior of the literate elite? And how can these changes in language and thought be linked to specific historical changes in the larger socio-political context? Connecting elements from recent theories of metaculture—broadly defined as ‘culture about culture’ (Tomlinson 2009; Urban 2001; Wilce 2009)—with theories of lexicalization (Geeraerts 1997; Geeraerts 2006; Geeraerts 2010; Wierzbicka 2008), the new framework of *lexicalized metaculture* proposed here facilitates the formulation of these questions and enables us to approach them through studies of lexical changes in large, diachronically stratified text corpora.

⁴ Zhōu 周 is the name of the dynasty that lasted from ca. 1045 BCE to 256 BCE. I use the terms *Zhōu* and *non-Zhōu* rather than the anachronistic terms *Chinese* and *non-Chinese* to refer to the identities for ‘self’ and ‘alien other’ constructed by the social and political elites of the Zhōu realm, which resided inside the geographical area of present-day China.

⁵ For convenience I am using the Chinese terms “Chūnqiū” and “Zhànguó” to refer to what are also known as the “Spring and Autumn” and “Warring States” periods. For the dating of these periods, I follow the data used in Loewe and Shaughnessy (1999). These terms are used here only to refer to time periods. That is, I am not committing myself to any claims that the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó existed as well-defined and clearly bounded historical entities.

The theories of metaculture which have served as inspiration for the framework proposed here define metaculture as the reflexive process of ‘culture’ commenting on itself. For example, a book review is a concrete manifestation of metaculture since it is a cultural entity which comments on or evaluates another cultural entity (i.e., the book under review). Most evaluations of cultural products are expressed verbally, either in writing (as in the book review), or in oral statements such as, for example, *Nineteenth century novels are boring*. Therefore, existing theories of metaculture focus primarily on various forms of metacultural *discourse*.

The main contribution to the theory of metaculture proposed here consists in formulating the notion of *lexicalized* metaculture. Lexicalized metaculture refers to language-specific lexicalized terms such as the English words *culture* and *customs* that refer to culture-specific concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘customs.’⁶ The key metacultural terms in pre-Qín texts that I will be discussing in this chapter are *wén* 文 and *sú* 俗. In addition to having a number of other meanings and uses (e.g., *wén* could refer to ‘decorative pattern’ and *sú* could be used as an adjective meaning ‘vulgar’), in the Zhànguó period these terms also came to be used to refer to the metacultural concepts of ‘refined tradition’ (*wén*) and ‘local custom(s)’ (*sú*). These lexical changes reflect changes in the collectively shared framework of language-specific conceptualizations of ‘culture’ of the literate elite. In contrast to existing theories of metaculture, which use *discourse* as the main unit of analysis, the approach used here allows us to use the *lexicon* as source in the historical study of epistemic changes in the language-specific

⁶ Italicized fonts are used to indicate linguistic expressions. For convenience I use the words *linguistic expression*, *form*, *word*, and *term* more or less interchangeably. In spite of the fact that words are linguistic signs consisting of both form (Saussure’s signifiant) and meaning (signifié), the term *word* is also used loosely to refer to linguistic forms or expressions. Single quotation marks ‘ ’ are used to indicate concepts or meanings of terms. These conventions allow me to state that the word (or term, form, or linguistic expression) *culture* has several meanings, including ‘set of conventionalized behaviors and transmitted practices’ and ‘culture,’ etc.

conceptualizations of notions of ‘traditions of transmitted practices’ and ‘conventionalized behavior.’

Anthropologists and historians have long been aware that the practice of relying on modern concepts of ‘culture’ to study the cultural history of pre-modern societies is fraught with hermeneutical pitfalls related to universalizing the analytical categories of modern languages such as English, French, etc., which are used by contemporary anthropological and historical studies. Indeed, since the term *culture* has also become notoriously vague and polysemous, some scholars have suggested rejecting it altogether.⁷ Others have suggested relying more on other concepts, such as ‘ideology’ or ‘discourse.’⁸ In this dissertation I argue that many of the problems related to the use of the English term *culture* can be avoided, or at least mitigated, by reconstructing the language-specific metacultural concepts and terms as they were used in the language of the community being studied. The theory of lexicalized metaculture proposed here thus draws on theories of historical anthropology that use linguistic methods to study how shared frameworks for conceptualizing conventionalized behavior develop and move through time.⁹ In other words, as indicated by the chapter title, by linking diachronic changes in the use and meaning of metacultural terms in pre-Qín texts to the socio-political changes affecting the group

⁷ For discussions in the field of anthropology on whether to abandon the concept of ‘culture’ or whether it can be salvaged, see Fox and King (2002) and Kahn (1989), and Trouillot (2002).

⁸ For discussion of the concept of ‘ideology,’ see Eagleton (1991), Laclau (1997), Larrain (1979), McLellan (1995), and Žižek (1989). For the concept of ‘discourse,’ see Foucault (1972) and Dijk (1985).

⁹ Duranti (2003) identifies three paradigms of linguistic anthropology in U.S. anthropology. The first paradigm, of which Franz Boas (1858–1942) was the founding figure, was mainly linguistic in focus and centered on the documentation and descriptive analysis of North American indigenous languages. For discussion of the Boasian paradigm in anthropology and Boas’ notion of ‘culture,’ see also Stocking (1968), and Stocking (1974). The second paradigm also focused on description of language but extended it to include pragmatics and took advantage of the enhanced documentation enabled by technical advances in recording equipment. Finally, the “third paradigm, with its focus on identity formation, narrativity, and ideology, constitutes a new attempt to connect with the rest of anthropology by extending linguistic methods to the study of issues previously identified in other (sub)fields” (Duranti 2003:323). Needless to say, the linguistic anthropological approach to the study of cultural history adopted here belongs to the third paradigm.

of individuals engaged in producing and debating theories about these concepts, I approach the study of the lexicalization of metaculture as a historical problem.

Applying this framework of lexicalized metaculture to a corpus of pre-Qín texts, I will demonstrate that a specialized metacultural terminology developed during the Zhànguó period. More specifically, the need for new metacultural terms emerged when new socio-political conditions, triggered by the disintegration of Western Zhōu government institutions and social mores that took place during the Chūnqiū (770-481 BCE) and Zhànguó periods (481-221 BCE), led to the formation of a community of individuals who had a vested interest in formulating and discussing theories of ‘self’ and ‘other’ in which the metacultural concept of *wén* played a central role. The majority of recent studies of identity in early China agree that pre-Qín constructed identities were grounded in ‘cultural’ rather than racial or ethnic differences.¹⁰ So far, most scholars simply use the modern English concept of ‘culture’ to analyze these identities. Little attention has been paid to the metacultural concepts and terminology present in the pre-Qín texts themselves. To be sure, there are numerous studies on different aspects of *wén*.¹¹ But so far there is no study which traces the emergence of metacultural uses of *wén* to refer to the particular notions of ‘culture’ conceptualized by members of the Zhōu elite to refer to their own traditions and moral values. In this dissertation I argue that the theory of lexicalized metaculture can correct this situation by allowing us to situate the changes in the meanings and uses of the metacultural term *wén* within the larger context of the socio-political changes that took place over the course of the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó periods.

¹⁰ See Beecroft (2010), Behr (2007), Behr (2010), Brindley (2003), Chén Zhì 陳致 (2007), Chén Zhì 陳致 (2010), Chin (2010), Di Cosmo (2002), Kim (2009), Pines (2005), Poo (2005), and Schaberg (2001a), among others.

¹¹ See, for example, the studies on *wén* by Chow (1979), Gawlikowski (1987), Gawlikowski (1988), Falkenhausen (1996), and Kern (2001).

By enabling the reconstruction of pre-Qín metacultural terms and concepts as they are used in pre-Qín texts, the approach proposed here can also help us address some of the hermeneutic problems related to the use of the modern English concept of ‘culture.’ As shown in chapter 5, the term *wén* is often translated as ‘culture.’ But is this translation justified? To what extent has the translatability of *wén* as *culture* become a factoidal legacy of the culturalist paradigm in Chinese historiography? By force of having been repeated numerous times both in translations of pre-Qín texts and in secondary studies of pre-Qín history and thought, the equation of *wén* as *culture* has slowly assumed the status of a widely accepted ‘fact.’ Since the ‘culturalist paradigm,’ introduced into Chinese studies by Fairbank, Levenson, and Parsons, is based on the assumption that “China” as a “cultural” entity has existed more or less unchanged since antiquity, it often leads to an essentialist linking of “culture” and “identity.”¹² Viewed on this background, equating *wén* with *culture* is especially problematic. One of the main goals of this dissertation is thus to study pre-Qín conceptualizations of traditions of conventionalized behavior and practices without relying on the English term *culture* as an analytical category. While I will still occasionally use *culture* in the discussion of anthropological theory in this chapter, I will phase out the word in chapters 2 and 3, as the reconstruction of language-specific metacultural concepts in pre-Qín texts progresses. Since, as aptly phrased by Morris-Suzuki (1995:762), the term *culture* is “burdened by the karma of previous incarnations,” I will use alternative expressions such as *(set of) conventionalized behaviors* or *(set of) transmitted practices* whenever possible to avoid unintended ‘culturalist’ associations of the term.

In chapters 2 and 3, I will show that a detailed lexical study of *wén* in pre-Qín texts reveals the existence of complex metacultural concepts with very different basic meanings and connotations from those of the Modern English term *culture*. A central aspect of the

¹² For discussion of the ‘culturalist paradigm’ in Chinese history, see section 2.3.

methodology proposed here is that it uses the shared lexicon of a corpus of pre-Qín texts as its main source. Most existing studies of early Chinese history and thought tend to be based on detailed analysis of a small collection of texts or even on a single text. In contrast, my focus in this dissertation is on the diachronic semantic analysis of the term *wén* and the metacultural concepts to which it refers. Pines (2009) uses an apt comparison with archaeology to illustrate the differences between traditional selective reading of a few texts and a corpus-based approach to history:

Archeologists differentiate between large-scale studies, such as regional surveys, and small-scale ones, such as specific excavations. While the latter allow for more precision, the former, due to their larger scale and comprehensiveness, can tolerate minor inaccuracies without losing their value. Such regional surveys can detect synchronic patterns as well as diachronic processes, which are invisible in the small-scale excavations of a single site, let alone a single household. Mutatis mutandis, this applies in textual studies as well. An in-depth study of a single text (or, even better, of a single textual unit, such as a chapter or a paragraph) can yield remarkable results in terms of precision, but it cannot detect synchronic patterns or diachronic processes, and it is vulnerable to skeptical views of textual authenticity. By contrast, my approach allows the detection of these patterns and processes and is less vulnerable to doubts about specific passages than in-depth textual studies. (Pines 2009:5-6)

The corpus-based approach to cultural history proposed here is a “regional survey” in Pines’ sense, that aims to “detect synchronic patterns as well as diachronic processes” in the crystallization of shared metacultural concepts through fine-grained analysis of the uses and meanings of a few key metacultural terms and concepts, which play a central role the way traditions of conventionalized behavior were discussed as well as in the construction of Zhōu and non-Zhōu identities.

One crucial difference between Pines’ corpus-based approach and the one presented here is that Pines surveys the corpus for “topics” manifested in textual passages, while I focus on

terms and the concepts behind them.¹³ In other words, while Pines analyzes the corpus at the level of *discourse*, I focus on the level of the *lexicon*. While seemingly a minor difference between ‘words’ and ‘discourse,’ I argue that there is an important difference between a concept expressed in ‘discourse’ and the same or similar idea crystallized in the form of a single lexicalized term. An idea or concept may be expressed in discourse before it enters the lexicon as a conveniently pre-packaged concept associated with a single word. Lexicalization does not take place before a significant number of people begin to exchange ideas about a certain concept and begin to need a more convenient way to express this concept in a single word rather than relying on cumbersome sentence-length descriptions. Since the lexicon is the shared vocabulary of a community using the same language, the lexicon is also a more reliable way to study this community’s collectively shared framework for conceptualizing conventionalized behavior. After all, passages culled from different texts may reflect the idiosyncratic views of the authors of those texts. Using them as units in an “archaeological” survey of intellectual trends may therefore be problematic.

To be sure, studies of early Chinese intellectual history that use lexical change as evidence are nothing new. Indeed, this approach is probably as old as the first concordances of pre-Qín texts. In western sinology, Karlgren (1926b), Karlgren (1929), Maspero (1928), Forke (1928) and Dobson (1967) represent pioneering efforts to use lexical change to date (and determine the authenticity of) pre-Qín texts. However, as discussed in Pines (2002c), this

¹³ See Pines (2009:12-3): “In the preliminary stage of my research, I surveyed (first manually then electronically) most of these texts, looking for common topics. I then tried to arrange relevant passages in a rough temporal sequence, to outline patterns of intellectual change throughout the Warring States period. Having prepared the outline, I then extracted those passages that are either the most influential in terms of subsequent discourse, or the most reliable in terms of their dating (for example, those from archaeologically discovered manuscripts), or alternatively the most articulate and most illustrative of the ideas discussed.”

philologically-oriented branch of western sinology largely died out with the generation of scholars that produced it.

Over the last decade, advances in scanning and digitization techniques have made the compilation and use of large text corpora both relatively cheap and widely accessible. This, in turn, has led to a renewed and rapidly growing interest in using lexical change to study transformations in thought and collectively shared conceptual frameworks. Lackner and Vittinghoff's edited volumes *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China* (2001b) and *Mapping Meanings: The Field of New Learning in Late Qing China* (2004) contain a number of articles that approach the study of intellectual change by analyzing changes in terminology. According to the editors, one of the main purposes of these volumes is to “explore how much historians and linguists can gain from crossing the boundaries of their disciplines and venturing out into the domains of the other” (Lackner, et al. 2001a:4). Although most of the papers in these two volumes deal with the influx of “Western” ideas and terms in the Late Qing and Republican periods, the interdisciplinary approach to intellectual and cultural history through a methodology that combines theories of lexical change and history is akin to the theory of lexicalized metaculture proposed in this dissertation. As pointed out by Lackner, Vittinghoff and Kurtz, “Lexical changes initiated by the influx of new or foreign knowledge are [...] of interest not only to historical linguists and lexicographers but also to students exploring the transcultural histories of science and thought” (Lackner, et al. 2001a:1-2).

This dissertation is part of this new approach to the study of history through lexical changes in large text corpora. One of this approach's main theoretical contributions is the explicit integration of theories of lexicalization and diachronic lexical semantics into the

anthropological and historical study of changes in collectively shared frameworks for conceptualizing conventionalized behavior and identity.¹⁴ Beyond providing a better understanding of the evolution of pre-Qín metacultural concepts, the case study of pre-Qín metacultural *wén* presented in chapters 2 and 3 also serves as a proof of concept for the approach proposed here, which indicates that it may potentially be applied to the study of ‘cultural’ reflexivity in other geographic areas and time periods.

Obviously, not all societies (modern or pre-modern) have metacultural terms which correspond to the various modern English concepts of ‘culture.’¹⁵ However, this does not necessarily mean that lexicalized metaculture (i.e., terms such as English *culture*) is the exclusive property of Western modernity. Certain uses of the term *wén* in pre-Qín texts also referred to abstract metacultural concepts, albeit different ones from those referred to by the modern English term *culture*. One of the main advantages of the framework of lexicalized metaculture proposed here is thus that it allows us to engage in comparative study of metacultural concepts, and to trace historical changes in the shared conceptual framework through changes in language-specific lexicalized metaculture without having to rely too heavily on the modern English metacultural concept of ‘culture,’ which is, after all, no less parochial and language-specific than the Old Chinese term *wén*.

Thus, using the lexicon as a historical source requires approaching the study of lexicalized metaculture as a historical problem. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to spelling out the central assumptions of the theories of lexicalization and metaculture, and illustrating the explanatory power of combining them.

¹⁴ Neither do previous studies of *wén* that draw on concordance data or word counts, e.g., Chow (1979), Gawlikowski (1987), Gawlikowski (1988), Falkenhausen (1996), Kern (2001).

¹⁵ See section 5.2 in chapter 5 for a discussion of the development of different concepts of ‘culture’ in Modern English.

1.1 Lexicalization as language-specific crystallization of shared conceptual frameworks

The importance of lexicalization is often overlooked by cultural historians, anthropologists, social scientists and psychologists who, when engaging in cross-cultural comparison, often tacitly assume that the English-language analytical categories of modern anthropological theories are universally applicable. Lexicalization, as used in this dissertation, refers to the diachronic process of “adoption into the lexicon.”¹⁶ The metacultural concept of ‘culture’—in the sense of a ‘set of conventionalized behaviors’—is lexicalized in modern English as the term *culture*. For example, an English speaker might say *The Germans and the French have different cultures*. The same idea can also be expressed without using the word *culture*, as in *The Germans and the French have different sets of conventionalized behaviors*, or *The Germans and the French do things differently*. These semantically quasi-equivalent statements illustrate the difference between lexicalized metaculture and metacultural discourse. That is, lexicalization pre-packages a certain language-specific metacultural concept (e.g., ‘set of conventionalized behaviors’) into a single lexical item (e.g., *culture*). This in turn facilitates the circulation of the lexicalized concept. Uttering or writing the word *culture* is faster and takes less effort than more cumbersome paraphrases such as *set of conventionalized behaviors*. The diachronic process of lexicalization can thus be used by historians to study when and why certain concepts become sufficiently

¹⁶ As observed by Brinton and Traugott (2005:18), “the term lexicalization has been used for two very different phenomena. Synchronically it has been used for the coding of conceptual categories. Diachronically it has been used variously for ‘adoption into the lexicon’ or ‘falling outside the productive rules of grammar.’” In this dissertation, I will only use the term to refer to the diachronic process of “adoption into the lexicon.” Other standard definitions of lexicalization in that sense include: (i) “The adoption of a word into the lexicon of a language as a usual formation that is stored in the lexicon and can be recalled from there for use” (Bussmann 1996:s.v. “lexicalization”); and (ii) “[A] process by which new linguistic entities, be it simple or complex words or just new senses, become conventionalized on the level of the lexicon” (Blank 2001:1603). For more discussion of diachronic onomasiology as a framework for the historical study of words and concepts, see also Blank (2003).

frequent or important to move from the paraphrase or discourse stage and to be adopted into the lexicon.

Cross-cultural studies of color terminology as crystallizations of collectively shared conceptualizations of color provide a useful illustration of the importance of paying attention to language-specific lexicalization. In her (2008) article “Why there are no ‘colour universals’ in language and thought,” Anna Wierzbicka criticizes the assumption that the abstract concept of ‘color’ is universally present.¹⁷ In spite of the fact that there are numerous languages which do not have a term for the abstract concept of ‘color,’ even for basic colors such as black, white, red, blue, yellow, etc., many researchers still assume that such concepts are universally present and that the speakers of these languages still have them although they have no words for them.¹⁸ “[L]inguists, and also anthropologists, often behave as if they believed that English is indeed the fittest [language]. They do so by absolutizing some concepts which are lexically encoded in English and giving them a fundamental status in human cognition” (Wierzbicka 2008:407).¹⁹ As a way to avoid this pitfall, Wierzbicka suggests that we need to pay more attention to how languages pre-package reality differently.

As an example of a language without color terms, Wierzbicka mentions the Australian language Warlpiri, which makes do with more concrete visual descriptors such as *yalyu-yalyu*, literally ‘blood-blood’; *yukuri-yukuri*, ‘grass-grass’; and *kunjuru-kunjuru*, ‘smoke-smoke’

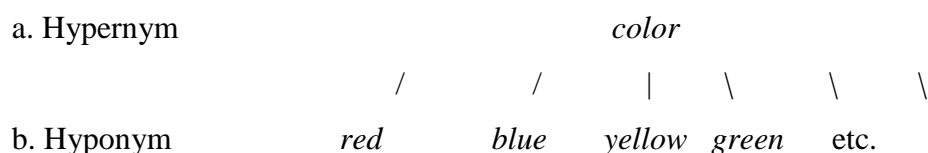
¹⁷ Color universals in human languages has been a hotly debated topic ever since the publication of Berlin and Kay’s seminal study *Basic Color Terms; Their Universality and Evolution* (1969). For a critical discussion of the controversy surrounding Berlin and Kay’s analysis, see Saunders (2000).

¹⁸ To be sure, recent studies of color perception in cognitive science have shown that humans (across cultures and languages) are endowed with the same dispositions to perceive primary colors. It is, however, important not to confuse this with the question of language-specific concepts and lexicalizations. In other words, while I do not advocate a return to the strong linguistic relativism of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, I do agree with Wierzbicka that language-specific lexicalization primes native speakers to think about the world in certain ways. For discussion of linguistic relativism and the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, see also Lucy (1992).

¹⁹ See also Wierzbicka (2006). For a succinct critical summary of Wierzbicka’s theory of natural semantic metalanguage, see Geeraerts (2010:127-137).

(Wierzbicka 2008:410). Crucially, these terms are *not* simply the Warlpiri one-to-one equivalents of the English color terms *red*, *green*, *gray*, etc.; rather they constitute a different way of conceptualizing the external appearance of things altogether. The term *yukuri-yukuri* does not simply mean ‘green’ but rather ‘looks like the earth where it is covered, after rain, with fresh new growth (*yukuri*)’ (Wierzbicka 2008:411).²⁰ Consequently, to fully understand how speakers of Warlpiri conceptualize and categorize the visual appearance of things, we must do in-depth lexical semantic and morphological analyses both of the individual terms involved and of their place in Warlpiri descriptive vocabulary in general. Since Warlpiri does not have color terms in the same sense as English color terms, it also lacks a word for the abstract concept ‘color’ (see line (a) in fig. 1) which serves as hypernym for the various color terms (its hyponyms) (see line (b) in fig. 1).

Figure 1. Hyponymy relations in Modern English color terminology.



Thus, in the words of Wierzbicka (2008:408), to assume “that speakers of [...] languages [such as Warlpiri] none the less ‘think’ in terms of ‘colour’ (although they never speak about ‘colour’) is to impose on those languages a conceptual grid alien to them.”

In addition to criticizing the tendency to assume modern Western (i.e., English, French, German, etc.) terms to refer to universally applicable analytical categories, Wierzbicka also uses

²⁰ Note that the English word *green* can also trace its origins to a root meaning ‘to grow,’ see Onions (1985:413). However, while this original metaphorical origin is no longer active in English, the Walpiri word *yukuri-yukuri* ‘appearance of the growth after rain’ is generated by a productive process of reduplication of the word *yukuri* ‘growth-covered.’

color terminology to outline a way to use changes in vocabulary to study historical changes in world-perception.

The concept of 'colour' emerges in a language when people become interested (often, because of new technologies) in distinguishing purely 'chromatic' aspects of appearance from other aspects, such as, for example, darkness, shininess, vividness, or brightness, which may have more to do with visibility or visual conspicuousness than with specific prototypes. It is not an accident that languages which have no word for 'colour' have no specific 'colour words' either. [...] When 'colour' words emerge in a language, a word for 'colour' emerges too (often by borrowing). For example, the language of Aboriginal teenagers in Central Australia includes now both the word *kala* [a loan word based on the English word *color*] and more specific loanwords such as *yala-wana* and *blu-wana* (from 'yellow one', 'blue one') (Langlois 2004:157). (Wierzbicka 2008:410)

Speakers of languages such as pre-colonial Warlpiri, which do not have abstract color terms, adapt to changes in their surroundings by borrowing the concepts and terms needed to talk about these new aspects of their world. This illustrates that it is possible to approach historical studies of epistemic changes in thought through structural changes in the lexicon.

While the combination of corpus-linguistics and diachronic lexical semantics enables us to *describe* changes in the use and meaning of linguistic expressions that reflect profound changes in worldview, *explaining* these changes requires us to go beyond the methodologies of linguistic analysis and to venture into the realm of socio-political history. Wierzbicka explains the absence of color terminology in pre-colonial Warlpiri by suggesting that the Warlpiri were known not to engage in the practice of dyeing. Furthermore, she also ventures that "discriminating between abstract 'colours' [...] makes sense in a world full of manufactured objects, where many objects of one kind can differ from other objects of the same kind in colour alone" (Wierzbicka 2008:13-4). Her hypothesis is that lexicalized color terms such as *yala-wana* meaning 'yellow[-one]' only entered the language with the introduction of mass-produced objects brought by the European settlers and the changes in life-style this implied. In other words,

fully understanding diachronic lexical changes requires linking them to socio-political changes in the larger historical context. Lexicalization thus constitutes the pivotal link that ties together a specific language to the changing needs of its speakers, and it allows us to study epistemic changes in thought through lexical change.

1.2 Lexicalized metaculture versus metacultural discourse

Just as Warlpiri does not have a hypernym for the various terms describing different chromatic appearances, Old Chinese texts from before the Zhànguó period do not contain metacultural uses of the terms *wén* and *sú*.²¹ Even when metacultural uses of *wén* and *sú* do develop in the Zhànguó period, the concepts they refer to are structured quite differently from the English words ‘culture’ and ‘customs’ to which they are often assumed to correspond. Hence simply translating Zhànguó period occurrences of *wén* and *sú* as ‘culture’ and ‘customs’ is just as problematic, and potentially misleading, as translating Warlpiri *yukuri-yukuri* as ‘green.’ Rather than assuming that composers of the pre-Qín corpus thought in terms of the modern English concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘customs,’ we should attempt to understand pre-Qín metacultural concepts on their own terms, i.e., through careful analysis of their use, meaning, and chronological evolution in Old Chinese texts.

Although chapters 2–5 of this dissertation will focus exclusively on the term *wén*, the development of metacultural uses of the term *sú* as ‘culture’ is better suited to illustrate the

²¹ I do not claim that the absence of metacultural uses of specific terms such as *wén* and *sú* entails that people in the pre-Zhànguó Zhōu realm lacked metacultural discourse. Indeed, metacultural statements of various forms (e.g. *These guys do things differently from us*) are probably present in all languages and societies. It is also possible that speakers of pre-Zhànguó Old Chinese had other lexicalized metacultural terms which are no longer attested in extant texts. Finally, it is also possible that pre-Zhànguó Old Chinese did have metacultural uses of *wén* and *sú*, but that the texts in which they were found are no longer in existence (or have yet to be discovered). In other words, one should always be careful not to use absence of evidence as evidence of absence. For more discussion of these issues, see sections 3.2 and 4.2 in chapters 3 and 4.

difference between metacultural discourse and lexicalized metaculture. Let us begin by considering a few passages from pre-Qín texts that illustrate how a chronological study of the lexicalization of metacultural concepts can help us discover the significant differences in metacultural awareness²² found in earlier and later strata of the corpus. The first passage is from the *Zuǒzhuàn*, the content of which I date to the fifth century BCE²³:

With respect to drink and food as well clothing and garments, we, the Róng groups, are not the same as the Huá. 我諸戎飲食衣服不與華同。(Zuǒzhuàn “Duke Xiang” 14.1)²⁴

This brief metacultural statement compares the Huá (= a term used by Zhōu elites to refer to themselves) and the non-Zhōu Róng people with respect to culinary (飲食 *yǐn shí* ‘(lit.) drinking eating’) and vestimentary (衣服 *yī fú* ‘(lit.) clothing and garments’) habits. Although the *Zuǒzhuàn* contains several explicit comparisons of the Zhōu elite with the non-Zhōu others like this one, it never uses the word *sú*.²⁵ Indeed the term word *sú* does not occur a single time in the entire

²² The expression *cultural awareness* is used here to refer to the awareness of the set of conventionalized behaviors of one’s own group and/or how it differs from the sets of conventionalized behaviors of other groups. I intentionally use the expression *set of* in this paraphrase in order to avoid associations with traditional structuralist concepts of ‘culture’ which view it as a closed semiotic system in which all the components are defined by their place in the system (modeled on structuralist theories of language as closed semiotic systems). See section 2.2 for a discussion of the history of this structuralist definition of ‘culture’ and its origins in Cuvier’s notion of the animal body as an interdependent system (‘un système où toutes les parties se tiennent’). Beyond potentially leading to essentialist patterns of thinking about ‘culture’ and ‘identity,’ conceiving of ‘culture’ as a closed system also makes it difficult to explain inter-cultural exchange and communication, as well as diachronic change. I therefore prefer to think of collectively shared sets of conventionalized behaviors and transmitted practices as open sets or collections, which function as collectively shared conceptual toolkits to which elements can be added (or from which elements disappear through obsolescence) through processes of diachronic change and/or adoption of practices from other groups.

²³ The exact dating of the composition of the material in the *Zuǒzhuàn*, as well as when it was edited in its extant forms, is a highly controversial question. While I agree with Pines (2002; 2009) that some of the content could have been composed at the end of the Chūnqiū period, I also agree with Schaberg’s (2001) conclusion that certain parts of the text must have been composed and added much later. However, most of the material in the *Zuǒzhuàn* was probably composed in the fifth century BCE. Indeed, the fact that the *Zuǒzhuàn* contains metacultural *wén* but lacks metacultural *sú* confirms the dating of the text to the 4th century BCE. Metacultural *wén* first emerges in the *Zuǒzhuàn* and in the oldest layers of the *Lúnǚ*. In contrast, metacultural *sú* is first attested somewhat later, in the early Zhànguó period in texts such as the *Mòzǐ*.

²⁴ All translations from Old Chinese are all my own unless otherwise indicated.

²⁵ See Lau and Chen (1995a).

Zuǒzhuàn. Thus, while the *Zuǒzhuàn* contains *metacultural discourse* on differences in eating and clothing habits, it does not contain the *lexicalized metacultural term sù*.

In contrast, the following passage from the *Lǚshì chūnqiū*, which dates from 239 BCE, illustrates a later stage in which *sù* has become part of a specialized terminology of lexicalized metaculture:

When King Fūchāi of Wú was going to attack Qí, [Wú] Zǐxù said, “That should not be done. As for Qí and Wú, our **practices and customs** differ and our words and speech are not mutually intelligible. Even if we got their land, we would not be able to live there. And even if we got their people, we would not be able to rule them. 吳王夫差將伐齊，子胥曰：「不可。夫齊之與吳也，習俗不同，言語不通，我得其地不能處，得其民不得使。」《呂氏春秋·貴直論》 (*Lǚshì chūnqiū* “Gùizhí lùn”)

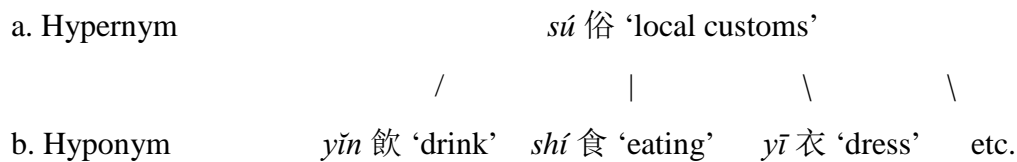
The *Zuǒzhuàn* passage contains only metacultural discourse. It discusses differences between the vestimentary and culinary customs of the Róng and the Huá, but it does so without using an abstract hypernym for these specific practices. In contrast, the metacultural discourse in the *Lǚshì chūnqiū* uses the abstract metacultural hypernym *xísù* 習俗 ‘practices and customs’ to describe the different conventionalized behaviors in the states of Wú and Qí. All languages are capable of producing metacultural discourse. However, it is not necessarily the case that all languages have specialized words for highly abstract metacultural concepts (just as some languages, like Warlpiri, do not have terms for colors or for the abstract category of ‘color’).²⁶ If they do, chances are that they refer to metacultural ideas which are conceptualized very differently. The lexicalization of abstract metacultural concepts such as *sù* ‘local customs’—which took place in the period between the composition of the content of the *Zuǒzhuàn* and the *Lǚshì chūnqiū*—thus

²⁶ I do not claim that Warlpiri lacks abstract concepts. Rather, it is just that its abstract categories do not match those of Modern English.

bears witness to a significant change in the collectively shared framework for conceptualizing metaculture.

Figure 2 below illustrates the hyponymy relation between the abstract metacultural term *sú* ‘local customs’ and (a few of) its hyponyms referring to concrete aspects of local practice.

Figure 2. Hyponymy relations in late Zhànguó period Old Chinese lexicalized metacultural terms for conventionalized behavior.



Just as Warlpiri does not have a hypernym for various color terms as English does (see line (a) in figure 1 in section 1.1), Old Chinese texts from the time of the *Zuǒzhuàn* and earlier do not have metacultural uses of the term *sú* (see line (a) in figure 2).

In sum, this brief comparison of Walpiri color terminology and pre-Qín lexicalized metaculture illustrates three points. First, while all languages have ways to describe physical appearances and conventionalized behaviors, not all have lexicalized terms for abstract hypernyms for color terms and various conventionalized behaviors. In existing theories of metaculture which are not equipped with a theory of lexicalization, the difference between the *Zuǒzhuàn* and the *Lǚshì chūnqiū* becomes difficult to articulate explicitly, since both are instances of metaculture in the broad sense of the term. Second, just as the Warlpiri word *yukuri-yukuri* does not simply mean ‘green,’ so does the Old Chinese word *sú* not simply mean ‘customs.’ Rather it has meanings and connotations which differ in important ways from the English word *customs*. Third, the fact that earlier strata of Old Chinese do not have metacultural *sú* (as illustrated by the *Zuǒzhuàn*) while later strata do (as illustrated by the *Lǚshì chūnqiū*)

shows that a study of the lexicalization of metaculture can be used to study changes in the shared framework for conceptualizing conventionalized behavior.

1.3 Metalanguage and metaculture

The central idea of the theory of lexicalized metaculture outlined here consists in tracing cultural reflexivity through the *language-specific lexicalized metaculture* in the same sense that Jakobson suggested that differences in linguistic reflexivity can be traced through the study of *language-specific lexicalized metalanguage*.²⁷ The parallels between Jakobson's notion of metalanguage and the notion of lexicalized metaculture proposed here may therefore be used to illustrate the advantages of incorporating theories of lexicalization into the theory of metaculture proposed by Urban and his followers. To do so, we need to briefly review the history of the terms *metalanguage* and *metaculture* and the theories behind them. As I will show in this section, both *metalanguage* and *metaculture* were first used to refer to universally applicable theories of language and culture. Only later were Jakobson's and Urban's notions of language- and culture-specific metalanguage and metaculture introduced.

The various uses of the term *metalanguage* can be divided into two groups depending on whether the prefix *meta-* is taken to mean 'trans-' or 'about.' The *Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd ed. 2001) defines metalanguage as "a language or set of terms used for the description or analysis of another language" and traces the origin of the word to German *Metasprache* used in Tarski (1935:282), which in turn is a translation from Alfred Tarski's original Polish neologism

²⁷ The title of this chapter "Lexicalized Metaculture as Historical Problem" is inspired by Jakobson's seminal paper "Metalanguage as Linguistic Problem" (1956).

metajęzyk from 1931.²⁸ The first sense of the term *metalanguage* thus originated in theories of linguistics and philosophy as a way to refer to the technical language used to discuss and analyze both natural and formal languages. In its earliest uses, the term *metalanguage* referred to the specialized technical languages developed by analytical philosophers and linguists.²⁹ These metalanguages were, per definition, designed to transcend the idiosyncrasies of individual natural languages in order to function as universally applicable analytical frameworks.

After Jakobson's (1956) "Metalanguage as linguistic problem," the term metalanguage also came to be used to refer to the language-specific metalinguistic terminologies and discourses about language which can be found in all natural languages. In this sense it refers to the specific terms and locutions in a particular language used in everyday colloquial speech by native speakers to reflexively refer to and describe language and acts of speaking. Jakobson's notion of metalanguage thus calls attention to the fact that every natural language has its own metalanguage consisting of idiosyncratically lexicalized metalinguistic concepts. It is thus important to distinguish clearly between the use of metalanguage to refer to (i) a universally applicable technical terminology that transcends the idiosyncrasies of natural languages and is used in theories of formal logic and linguistics to describe various object languages, and (ii) the idiosyncratic language-specific terms and locutions of a particular natural language used to talk about language and linguistic behavior.

²⁸ The German and Polish words for 'metalanguage' have the same internal structure as the English word *metalanguage*. That is, they are composed of the prefix *meta-* added to the words *Sprache* and *język*, which are the words for 'language' in German and Polish respectively.

²⁹ The online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. 2001, provides the following list of early uses of the term *metalanguage* by philosophers and linguists, including the following two passages:

- (i) The concepts *analytic* and *contradictory* in the language *L*, for instance, cannot be defined in *L*, as Carnap has shown. In order to escape from these restrictions one must build up a new language (a so-called ***meta-language***) disposing of more means of expressing thoughts than the former. (Grelling 1936:486)
- (ii) This would mean, in logistic terms, that linguistics is a **metalanguage** of the first degree, whereas phonetics and semantics are **metalanguages** of the second degree. (Hjelmslev 1947:75)

Examples of metalinguistic (in the latter sense of the word) utterances or discourse include English statements such as *What do you mean?* or *These two words are not synonyms*. The terms *word*, *mean* and *synonym* in these metalinguistic utterances are examples of language-specific **lexicalized** metalinguistic concepts. Cross-linguistic comparison of metalinguistic terms and concepts immediately reveals their profoundly language-specific nature. Thus one of the most common translations of the question *What do you mean?* in colloquial Mandarin Chinese is *Nǐ shì shénme yìsi* 你是什麼意思? ‘(lit.) You are [of] what meaning/intention?’ Mandarin Chinese has no lexicalized counterpart to the English verb *to mean* and uses a phrasal expression involving the noun *yìsi* 意思 ‘meaning/intention’ instead. Furthermore, study of the semantics of the Mandarin noun *yìsi* 意思 and the English verb *to mean* also reveals significant differences in the ways the two languages conceptualize the concepts of ‘meaning’ and ‘intending (to mean).’

Beyond cross-linguistic variation, metalanguage in Jakobson’s sense of the term is also subject to diachronic variation between different stages of the same language. Both (i) the linguistic expressions *word*, *mean* and *synonym* themselves and (ii) the metalinguistic concepts they refer to are subject to historical change. The changes in the meanings and uses of these terms over time can thus be used to study historical changes in linguistic reflexivity (i.e., the way speakers think about and conceptualize language).

The words for the concept ‘word’ in the history of the Chinese language may serve as a good illustration of historical changes in lexicalized metalanguage. In modern Mandarin Chinese the English sentence *These two words are not synonyms* is typically expressed as *zhè liǎngge zì/cí bú shì tóng yì cí* 這兩個字/詞不是同義詞 ‘(lit.) These two words/characters are not same-meaning-words.’ Note that the Chinese speaker has to choose between the words *zì* 字 ‘word, character’ and *cí* 詞 ‘word, saying’ which can both be translated as *word* in English. One of the

main differences between the *zì* and *cí* is that the former can also refer to individual Chinese characters as orthographic entities, while the latter is also used to refer to poly-morphemic words as well as longer phrases. Although both *zì* and *cí* can mean ‘word,’ native speakers tend to use *zì* as the default term for ‘word’ in colloquial speech. Using *cí* to talk about ‘words’ is associated with learned registers of the language or linguistic terminology.³⁰

Neither *zì* nor *cí* were used to refer to single ‘words’ in pre-Qín Old Chinese. At that time it was the word *yán* 言 which could refer to a constituent part of an utterance, as well as to entire sayings or utterances. In this respect Old Chinese *yán* is similar to the word *word* which in early Modern English could also refer to entire sayings or utterances (as in *May I have a word with you*), in addition to being used to refer to single ‘words.’ The metalinguistic concepts and expressions for ‘word’ in Chinese have changed quite considerably over the last two and a half millennia. Thus the fact that one of the most common terms for ‘word’ in colloquial Mandarin is *zì*—which means both ‘written character’ and ‘word’ but not a longer phrase or saying—probably reflects the larger role of written media in society today compared to pre-Qín China, when writing and literacy was still the privilege of a small fraction of the population and when there was still a strong tradition of memorization and oral transmission. Changes in lexicalized metalanguage can thus be used to study changes in the collective conceptualizations of language.

Now let us turn to the term *metaculture* and its parallels with *metalanguage*. Like metalanguage, the various uses of the concept of metaculture can also be divided into two groups depending on whether the prefix *meta-* is understood in the meaning ‘trans-’ or ‘transcending,’ or whether it is taken to mean ‘about.’ Before the 1990s the term *metaculture* was used mostly to refer to “[a]ny culture, or set of cultural phenomena, which transcends the boundaries of

³⁰ For an early study of the difference between *zì* and *cí*, see Chao (1946).

geography, class, epoch, etc.”³¹ Similarly the term *metacultural* was used in the meaning “[t]hat transcends any particular culture, or exists across cultures.”³² Tooby and Cosmides (1992:91) use the term *metaculture* to refer to the “the system of universally recurring relationships established and constituted by [...] our universal evolved species-typical psychological and physiological architectures [...]”³³ Studies within that tradition (e.g., Baumeister (2005)) are, per definition, not interested in the specific features of particular cultures.³⁴

The second set of theories of “metaculture”—which interpret the prefix *meta-* to mean ‘about’—refer loosely to “the ways in which culture [...] speaks of itself” (Mulhern 2000:i)³⁵ or “culture about culture” (Urban 2001:3, 281n.4). In contrast to theories of transcendent or universal metaculture, theories adopting this definition of the term (Tomlinson 2009; Urban 2001; Wilce 2009) are all highly sensitive to the culture-specific nature of the various manifestations of metaculture. After an Amerindian Brazilian myth-teller finishes retelling a well-known tale, his

³¹ This definition is taken from the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. 2001, which also lists the following occurrences:

- 1959 R. Mukerjee *Symbolic Life Man* xvi. 275 Meta-science, meta-culture and meta-physics equally insist upon the participation of the common man of the world.
- 1971 *Listener* 15 Apr. 473/1 We are unquestionably dealing with a literacy, with codes of recognition so widespread and dynamic that they constitute a ‘meta-culture.’

³² This definition is from the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. 2001, which also lists the following attested occurrences:

- 1949 *Philos. & Phenomenol. Res.* 9 578 It has become fashionable ... to explain the character of a culture by reference to a pervasive belief in some meta-cultural value grounded in a metaphysical reality.
- 1984 J. Grahn *Another Mother Tongue* x. 270 The qualities of Gayness are metacultural, they transcend ... historical time, ... national borders.

³³ See also the definitions of *culture* and *metaculture* in Triandis (2007). The discussion in Fox and King (2002:109) of “Tooby and Cosmides’ idea of a panhuman metaculture as the artifact of a panhuman physiological and psychological architecture” is also useful. Needless to say, this concept of universal metaculture as transcending individual cultures is not relevant to the analysis presented here and will not be discussed in further detail.

³⁴ For a brief summary of theories based on this definition of “metaculture,” see also Kitayama and Cohen (2007:62-65).

³⁵ This particular formulation is from the editorial blurb at the beginning of the book. Since it is not signed, it is unclear if this passage is by Mulhern himself or by someone else. Nevertheless, this definition of “metaculture” is faithful to the way the term is used inside the monograph. In the glossary at the end of his book, Mulhern defines “metaculture” as follows: “Metaculture, or ‘metacultural discourse,’ is the term in which I summarize a critique of the intellectual traditions of ‘culture’ discussed here. Metacultural discourse is that in which ‘culture’ addresses its own generality – that is, the whole domain of meaning – and historical conditions of existence. Its fixed impulse is to displace politics as a form of social authority in the name of true and truly general authority, or ‘culture’” (Mulhern 2000:204).

audience express their approval or criticism through statements and gestures. Being a comment on a cultural object (the retold myth), these comments on the performance are themselves metacultural objects (cultural objects which are ‘about’ other objects) which are produced according to a specific set of conventions. A film review written by a professional critic and published in the *New York Times* is also a metacultural object that follows a fixed set of unwritten rules. Both film reviews and comments on Brazilian myth-retellings are highly culture-specific metacultural objects, produced according to different sets of culture-specific conventions.³⁶

Although Urban does not explicitly mention Jakobson (1956), his notion of metaculture as a particular culture’s way to reflect upon culture is conceptually akin to Jakobson’s notion of metalanguage as a particular language’s way to express ideas about language. That is, just as Jakobson observed that each language has its own metalanguage, Urban’s work is based on the implicit assumption that each culture has its own metaculture. The *Oxford English Dictionary* does not give any examples of this use of the word *metaculture*, which seems to be less than two decades old.

In sum, the main proposal of the approach used here consists in reconstructing collectively shared conceptualizations of conventionalized behavior through their language-specific manifestations as lexicalized metacultural concepts, in the same sense that Jakobson suggested that cross-linguistic differences in collectively shared conceptualizations of language can be traced through the study of language-specific lexicalized metalanguage. That is, just as each natural language has its own idiosyncratic metalanguage, which can be studied by linguists in its own right, similarly the ‘culture’ of each group or people has its own set of idiosyncratic

³⁶ Both comments on myth-retellings and film reviews are discussed as examples of metacultural entities in Urban (2001).

metacultural concepts, the lexicalization of which can be studied by anthropologists and historians as a historical phenomenon.

1.4 Different manifestations of metaculture: what is a metacultural concept?

In existing theories of metaculture within Urban's framework³⁷, metacultural entities are defined very broadly as 'cultural products'—to use a term from Tomlinson (2009:18)—which are about 'cultural products.' This definition is so general that it includes all kinds of phenomena ranging from linguistic entities (either oral or written), film, photography, plastic arts, to music and theater performances. Indeed, anything that can function as a conventionalized 'comment' or 'judgment' on 'culture' is, by this broad definition, a manifestation of metaculture. Terms such as "metacultural discourse" restrict the scope to linguistically manifested metaculture. But more precision is still needed. That is, a narrower definition of *lexicalized* metaculture may enable us to formulate more precise hypotheses about diachronic conceptual changes. In this and the following two sections, I briefly spell out my assumptions about lexicalization, the lexicon, the linguistic community supporting it, as well as the formal and semantic criteria for what counts as lexeme/word and what counts as a metacultural concept.

Wilce's (2009) study of metaculture manifested in 'labels' for conventionalized behaviors, such as the term *lament*, contains the beginnings of an attempt to narrow the scope of the definition of metaculture in order to thus strengthen the explanatory potential of the theory. The different degrees of specificity in the scope of metaculture so far invoked in the literature are listed in figure 3:

³⁷ See Urban (2001), Tomlinson (2009), and Wilce (2009).

Figure 3. Different levels of specificity in existing definitions of metaculture

- a. ‘Cultural products’ about ‘cultural products’ (including both material culture and discourse)
- b. Metacultural discourse, or (cultural) discourse about cultural entities
- c. Labels for cultural phenomena (e.g., laments)

In addition to Wilce’s (2009) study of laments as metaculture, Tomlinson’s (2009) study of the Fijian terms *lotu* ‘religion’ and *vanua* ‘custom, tradition’ constitutes another study of metaculture manifested in words, i.e., level (c) in figure 3 above.³⁸ Thus, in a general sense, these studies can also be said to be about lexicalized metaculture. However, neither Tomlinson (2009) nor Wilce (2009) spell out their assumptions about lexicalization. Nor do they contain explicitly stated theories of lexicalized metaculture or metacultural concepts. However, in order to integrate theories of metaculture with theories of lexicalization and lexical semantics, we need an explicit definition of what constitutes a metacultural concept.

Providing a non-circular definition of what qualifies as a metacultural concept is both indispensable and highly difficult. As mentioned above, Wilce’s (2009) study of ‘laments’ as metaculture skirts the issue and ultimately falls short of providing an explicit definition of metacultural concepts. Instead, as illustrated in the following passages, he relies on the vaguely defined terms of *metaculture* and *metadiscourse* of existing theories:

This book is not just about lament itself but about *us, our labels for lament*, and *our* interest in it—and thus about **metaculture**. It is a study of *invocations* of lament, recognizing that such **metadiscourses** always surround and regiment communicative forms. What gives this meta-study its integrity is the fact that people use these **words** – **English lament, Greek thrênos**, etc.—not that their meaning is clear or fixed. I delimit my study with reference to category labels others invoke. These **labels** represent and reproduce notions of a unified genre or set of genres, and such notions tell us something of the societies and cultural processes that generate them – including my own American academic culture. (Wilce 2009: 27, highlighting in bold added here)

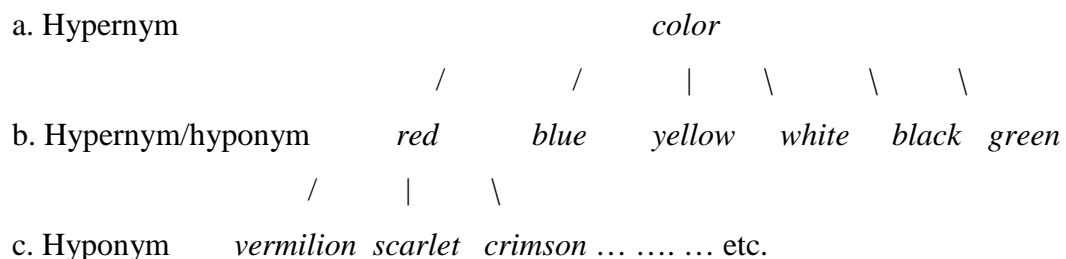
³⁸ See Tomlinson (2009: 21-26). Tomlinson (2009) does not simply assume that *lotu* and *vanua* mean ‘religion’ and ‘custom, tradition’ respectively. Indeed, in his discussion of these terms he goes to great length to illustrate the complex layer of meanings of both terms and the impossibility of finding a single equivalent in English.

Thus I propose to study cultures of lament as always already **metacultural**. (Wilce 2009:14, highlighting in bold added here)

In principle, nothing prevents one from extending Wilce’s definition to all names and labels of cultural practices and entities. This, however, would yield an unmanageably large set of terms, including a wide range of words for concrete cultural objects or behaviors, such as *book, letter, review, film, prayers, liturgy, etc.*, as well as more abstract metacultural concepts such as ‘culture’ and ‘custom.’ In this broad definition any lexical item referring to something that is part of a ‘culture’ (e.g., dance, cooking, teaching, reading, poetry, etc.) could be considered a metacultural ‘label’ in Wilce’s sense. Hence, in order to arrive at a more useful definition, it has to be narrowed down further.

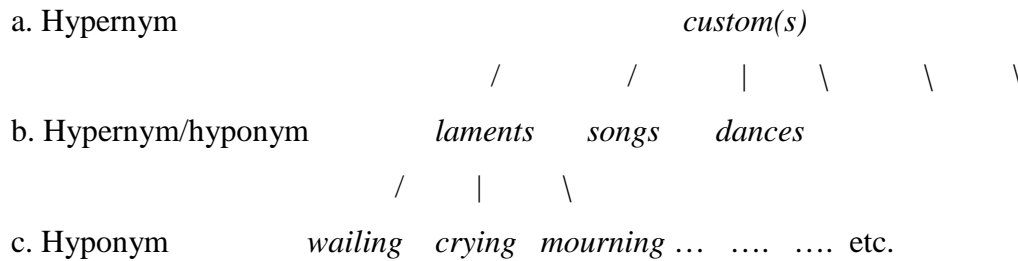
Once again insights from the lexical semantic study of the color terminology may provide a useful model. As mentioned in the discussion of Wierzbicka’s (2008) study of the role lexicalization plays in the formation of language-specific color concepts in section 1.1, some languages lack the lexicalized manifestations of the abstract concept of color. In contrast, Modern English has color terms of varying degrees of abstraction. Using the traditional semantic relations of hyponymy, in modern English the color terms can be analyzed as in figure 4.

Figure 4. Hyponymy relations in Modern English color terminology.



The words for different hues of ‘red,’ *scarlet*, *vermilion*, *carmine*, and *crimson*, at the lowest level (c) in table 7, are all hyponyms of the primary color ‘red’ on level (b). In turn, the words for the primary colors terms *red*, *blue*, *yellow*, etc. at level (b) are all hyponyms of the abstract term *color* on level (a). The hyponymy relations of color terms may serve as a useful analogy for hyponymy relations between metacultural terms and words for cultural products and behaviors. More specifically, I suggest that just as Warlpiri exemplifies a language without a lexicalized hypernym for basic color terms, level (a) in figure 4, pre-Zhànguó Old Chinese is a language without lexicalized manifestations of certain abstract metacultural concepts which developed in Old Chinese after the middle of the first millennium BCE. Again, a comparison with Modern English may be useful. Thus, as illustrated in figure 5, the abstract lexicalized metacultural concept ‘customs’ can be viewed as the hypernym of a long array of words for different kinds of conventionalized behaviors.

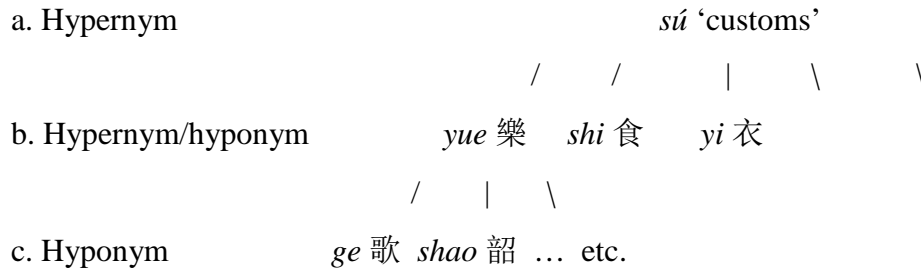
Figure 5. Hyponymy relations in Modern English lexicalized metacultural terms for conventionalized behaviors.



As illustrated by the comparison of the *Zuǒzhuàn* and the *Lǚshì chūnqiū* above, texts from the beginning of Zhànguó period bear witness to a stage of Old Chinese that did not have metacultural uses of *wén* and *sú*. Thus by restricting my definition of what qualifies as a metacultural concept to the top of the hyponymy pyramid, e.g., level (a) in figure 6, I reduce the

class of terms considerably from Wilce’s implicit definition that also includes the much larger sets of terms on level (b) and (c).

Figure 6. Hyponymy relations in Zhànguó period Old Chinese lexicalized metacultural terms for conventionalized behavior.



At this point one may rightfully object that this definition of ‘abstract lexicalized metaculture’ runs the risk of simply universalizing the tops of the English pyramids of hyponymy. In other words, assuming that pre-colonial Warlpiri ‘lacks’ a hypernym for basic color terms amounts to the same thing as assuming that it ‘lacks’ a term for the abstract concept ‘color’ which is universally present cognitively, and which conveniently happens to be lexicalized in the English word ‘color.’ Objections such as these should be taken seriously. Indeed, one of the main purposes of this dissertation is to illustrate the dangers of universalizing English analytical terms such as ‘culture’ and ‘custom,’ etc. To address these objections I propose the following two solutions.

First, taking a diachronic perspective on lexical changes makes it possible to infer that certain abstract lexicalized metacultural concepts present at later stages were absent from earlier stages of the language. In the case of the pre-Qín period, the extant written material indicates that abstract metacultural uses of the term *sú* did not exist before the second half of the first millennium BCE. However, rather than simply stipulating that pre-Zhànguó vocabulary ‘lacked’

an equivalent of the English word ‘customs,’ I observe that metacultural *sú* emerged in the Zhànguó period, and I make it my task to explain this lexical change. Note that the fact that metacultural terms such as *sú* and *wén* developed organically out of earlier non-metacultural uses makes these terms different from the Warlpiri term *kala* ‘color,’ which was introduced as a loan word from Modern English. In other words, it was not the imposition of foreign metacultural concepts which gave rise to Zhànguó-period lexicalized metaculture.³⁹

Second, rather than simply considering concepts such as *wén* to be the Old Chinese ‘equivalent’ of Modern English ‘culture,’ I provide fine-grained analyses which demonstrates that *wén* and *culture* refer to language-specific metacultural concepts that occupy different places in different semantic webs of related meanings. In this regard I follow Wierzbicka in emphasizing the importance of paying close attention to language-specific lexicalization. The fact that metacultural uses of the term *culture* are derived by metaphorical extension from the concrete meanings of ‘cultivation’ and ‘growing,’ while metacultural uses of *wén* are derived from the concrete meaning of ‘external decoration’ or ‘pattern,’ is thus important for a full understanding of the differences in the metacultural concepts referred to by *wén* and *culture*. Most existing studies of *wén* only discuss a few of the meanings of the term. In contrast, I argue that we need to take a more holistic view of lexical semantics, which allows us to be sensitive to the ways in which metacultural uses of *wén* are still informed by the other related meanings in the complex semantic field of the multiply polysemous term. In section 5.2, I show how a fine-grained analysis of the entire semantic field of the polysemous term *culture* helps reveal that the English concept of ‘culture’ is not a universally applicable category of anthropological

³⁹ In contrast to metacultural uses of the terms *wén* and *sú* in pre-Qín texts, the modern Mandarin Chinese term *wénhuà* 文化 ‘culture’ originated as a Japanese calque loan from German *Kultur*, French *culture*, and English *culture* in the 19th century and was introduced into Modern Chinese via Japanese; see Wáng Lì 王力 (1980:598-603) and Lydia Liu (2004). For a discussion of the origin of term *bunka* 文化 ‘culture’ in Modern Japanese and its use in Japanese anthropology and ethnography, see Morris-Suzuki (1995).

description, but rather a highly language-specific, parochial concept. And in chapters 2 and 3, I use the same method to analyze the language-specific nature of metacultural *wén*.

In sum, I distinguish between three kinds of metaculture: (i) abstract lexicalized metaculture (e.g., of the word *customs* in utterances such as *The French and the German have different culinary customs* as well as similar uses of metacultural *wén* and *sú* in pre-Qín Old Chinese); (ii) metacultural discourse (e.g., utterances such as *The French and the Germans cook and enjoy their meals differently*); (iii) non-linguistic metaculture (e.g., graphic and plastic representations containing a metacultural comment). The theory of lexicalized metaculture presented here distinguishes itself from existing theories of metaculture mainly in that it uses theories of lexical semantics and lexicalization to narrow down the range of object studied to lexicalized metacultural concepts.

1.5 Lexicon and linguistic community

If lexicalized metaculture is the crystallization of collectively shared conceptualizations of conventionalized behavior, then the question immediately arises: *whose* conceptualizations of conventionalized behavior? In other words, we need to spell out our assumption about the nature and composition of the particular lexicon studied as well as of the linguistic community using it. Defining the lexicon relevant to this study is no trivial matter. Likewise, the equally important question of who shared this lexicon is also exceedingly difficult to answer based on the scant evidence available. However, since both questions have important implications for the use of vocabulary changes to study historical changes in cultural awareness, neither question can be avoided.

At a very basic level, a lexicon can be defined as the total set of lexical items of a particular idiom used (in either spoken or written form) by a linguistic community at a given point in time.⁴⁰ The items in the lexicon include all words (both single morpheme words and multiple-morpheme compounds), grammatical particles and affixes, as well as certain phrasal units such as fixed proverbs and phrases. Except for idioms, it does not contain larger syntactic constructions such as phrases, paragraphs, and discourses that are generated according to productive morphological and syntactic patterns. In Old Chinese both single morpheme words such as *sú* 俗 ‘customs’, *wén* 文 ‘refined tradition’, *lǐ* 禮 ‘rites,’ etc.⁴¹ as well as compounds such as *xísú* 習俗 ‘customs and practices’ are part of the lexicon. Even certain fixed phrases such as proverbs may be considered as lexical items.

As for the linguistic community of the Old Chinese language preserved in pre-Qín texts, existing evidence only allows us to speculate about its exact size, composition, and geographic distribution. Although there is considerable evidence of different dialects of Old Chinese—as indicated by both phonological and lexical differences between texts originating in different parts of the Zhōu realm⁴²—it nevertheless seems justifiable to assume the existence of a certain kind of core lingua franca used by the educated elite (who were versed in the same classics), and thus by the composers of the various texts on statecraft and moral philosophy.⁴³ In spite of this, people writing in different parts of the Zhōu realm still occasionally used certain local expressions. For example, the *Zhuāngzǐ* uses a number of words which have later been identified in the *Fāngyán* as belonging to a southern (i.e., Chǔ) dialect. An example of a word from the

⁴⁰ For a standard linguistic definition of the lexicon, see Aitchison (1994).

⁴¹ *Sú* may not be a mono-morphemic word. According to Baxter (p.c.), it could be derived from the same root as *yù* 欲 ‘desire, want’ by prefixation.

⁴² For studies of linguistic diversity and dialect variation in early China, see Behr (forth.), Behr (2004), Pulleyblank (1983), Unger (2007). See also Baxter (1992), Baxter (forth.), Baxter and Sagart (forth.).

⁴³ For studies of the common language of the educated elite in the pre-Qín period, see Behr (2010) and Zhū 朱 (1994).

Chǔ dialect used in the *Zhuāngzǐ* can be found in the “Xiāo yáo yóu” chapter, where the word *tiáo* 蜩 is used. According to the *Shuōwén*, *tiáo* 蜩 means *chán* 蟬 ‘cicada’ (“蜩，蟬也。”). The Han Dynasty dialect survey compiled by Yáng Xióng (53 BCE–18 CE), the *Fāngyán*, identifies *tiáo* 蜩 as a Chǔ word for *chán* 蟬 (“蟬，楚謂之蜩。”).⁴⁴ In spite of local (substrate) influences on the geographically scattered lingua franca of the elite found in the written records from the period, I argue that the more abstract theoretical terms such as metacultural *wén* and *sú*—which presumably were less likely to have local counterparts—were part of the core vocabulary of the common language of the literate elites from all over the Zhōu realm.

In other words, the composers of the *Zhuāngzǐ* were probably bilingual in the sense that they knew and spoke one or more local dialects while at the same time being proficient in the common language of the pan-Zhōu literate elite. They may therefore occasionally have used words from local dialects to refer to those entities for which both the pan-Zhōu elite lingua franca and their local dialect had words (e.g., the Chǔ dialect word *tiáo* 蜩 for ‘cicada’ for *chán* 蟬 ‘cicada’ in the lingua-franca, etc.). In contrast, abstract metacultural terms such as *wén* and *sú* were coined by elite thinkers in the lingua franca and, as a consequence, did not already have counterparts in the local dialects or languages. Thus the linguistic community of educated (and potentially literate) individuals exchanging theories of statecraft and moral philosophy through debates and written media—which only included a small fraction of the general population⁴⁵—

⁴⁴ For studies of the Chǔ dialect in pre-Qín times, see Zhū Zhèngyì 朱正義 (2006) and Park (forth.). For a study of Yáng Xióng’s *Fāngyán* and early Chinese dialectology, see Serruys (1959).

⁴⁵ For literacy rates in early China, see Giele (forth.). For discussions of literacy and orality, see also Meyer (2012), etc.

was spread (thinly) over different linguistic areas of the Zhōu realm (which each had its own substrate-influenced local lexica or maybe even one or more non-Sino-Tibetan languages).⁴⁶

Just as the lexicon and the linguistic community supporting it are intimately connected, the concept of what counts as a lexical item (a.k.a. lexeme, word, or term) is also closely linked to the linguistic community. Thus a word is only part of the lexicon if the members of the linguistic community recognize the word and agree on its basic meanings and uses. While individuals may either reject or embrace the ideas behind a given lexicalized concept, they still need to know its basic meanings (e.g., although critical of the *rú* metacultural concept of *wén*, the composers of the *Hánfēizǐ* are still familiar with its meaning and use)⁴⁷ for this word to be part of the shared vocabulary. Thus in this sense the pre-Qín lexicalized metaculture studied in chapters 2 and 3 represents the crystallizations of a collectively shared framework of conceptualizing conventionalized behavior that transcended different philosophical traditions. Since what we are interested in studying here is the framework for conceptualizing conventionalized behavior which is shared by all the members of the pan-Zhōu educated elite communicating in Old Chinese, both the ‘famous books’ (e.g., the *Shī*, the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Mèngzǐ*, *Zhuāngzǐ*, etc.) as well as less studied works (e.g., *Yànzǐ chūnqǐū*, *Zhōulǐ*, etc.) are equally important sources of evidence.⁴⁸

The cultural awareness and reflexivity that can be gauged through the study of metacultural terms in the written language only reflects on the educated elites’ framework for conceptualizing conventionalized behavior. Since the uneducated segments of the pre-Qín population did not express themselves in writing, the only sources we have that can shed light on

⁴⁶ Although I do not operate with the notion of an ideal speaker-listener community, it is still necessary to assume the existence of a core set of people sharing the same conventions. This ideal community may consist of speakers with different sub-vocabularies (or grammars) and may overlap with other communities (due to bilingualism, inter-generational diachronic variation, etc.).

⁴⁷ For an analysis of *wén* in the *Hánfēizǐ*, see chapter 3 section 3.2.

⁴⁸ For more discussion the composition of the corpus used here, see section 1.7.

their level of cultural awareness are (i) indirect descriptions in pre-Qín texts, and (ii) non-linguistic archaeological evidence. Since reliable evidence is extremely scarce, the nature and level of cultural awareness of the non-literate population will not be discussed further here. But it is nevertheless important to bear in mind that the collectively shared framework for conceptualizing conventionalized behavior that is found in the extant pre-Qín texts only represents the tiny fraction of the population who expressed themselves in writing.

As illustrated in more detail in chapter 4, explicitly stating our assumptions about the lexicon and the linguistic community using it will enable us to formulate specific hypotheses about the link between lexical changes on the one hand, and intellectual and socio-political changes on the other. Therefore this dissertation helps us gain a clearer picture of those who were responsible for coining and circulating lexicalized metaculture. This in turn will make it possible for us to connect the emergent cultural awareness and reflexivity embodied in the metacultural terms to the larger historical context of the socio-political changes that took place during the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó periods. In other words, as indicated by the title of this chapter, lexicalized metaculture is a historical problem.

1.6 Culturomics: lexicon as source in corpus-based studies of ‘culture’

In a series of articles in *Science* from 2010 and 2011, a group of researchers from Harvard, Harvard College, MIT, Google, and Houghton Mifflin Hartcourt launched an approach to the study of culture dubbed ‘culturomics.’ The central idea is to “introduce quantitative methods into the study of culture” by using statistical methods to detect patterns of lexical change in large textual corpora (Michel, et al. 2010).. However, as will be argued in this section, culturomics is currently little more than a new formulation of the old idea that quantifiable lexical data can be

used to bolster historical analysis of history, thought and society. Without a theoretical framework which allows us to *contextualize the lexicon* as a source, this kind of statistical data remains difficult to use meaningfully in studies of intellectual and sociopolitical history.

Claiming “culturomic results [to be] a new type of evidence in the humanities” (Michel et al. 2010:181) is somewhat of stretch. Lexicographers, anthropological linguistics, and linguistic anthropologists, as well as scholars of early Chinese history, have already used quantifiable changes in lexical patterns to study cultural history for decades if not centuries. What *is* new about culturomics, however, is the sheer size of the textual corpus and the application of statistical analysis. These aspects of the culturomics approach have only recently been made possible due to the invention of digitization technologies, such as high quality scanners and optical character recognition software. Thus the corpus forming the base of Michel et al.’s (2010) study consists of more than five million books, which amounts to approximately “4% of all books ever published.” Their English language corpus is composed of books published in the 200 year period from 1800 to 2000 and contains over 361 billion words. Since it is not humanly possible to read this much data, Michel et al. (2010) propose a method for mining this dataset for valuable insight into cultural history through the application of statistical methods that map changes in word frequencies over time. Examples of the word frequencies studied by Michel et al. are given in figures 7 and 8.

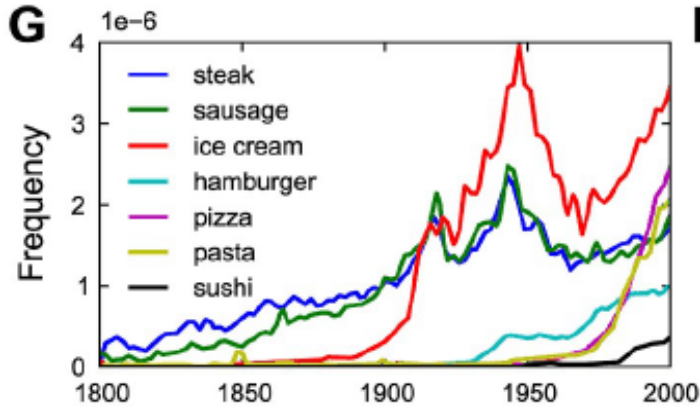


Figure 7. Frequencies of words for food items over time. (Michel et al. 2010:181, fig. 5G)

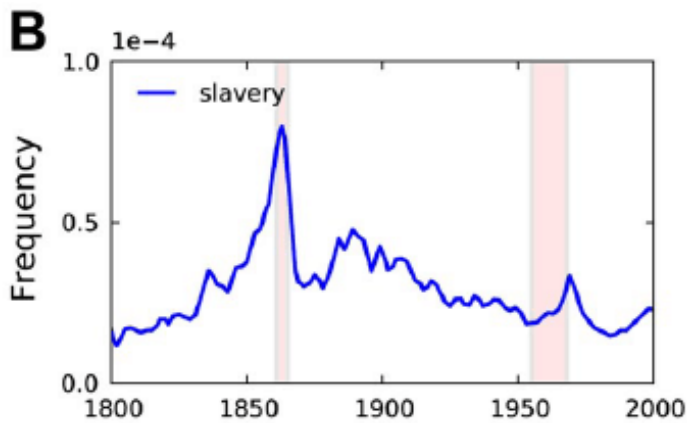


Figure 8. Frequencies of word *slavery* over time. (Michel et al. 2010:177, fig. 1B).

As shown in fig. 7, word frequencies can be a useful source of information when studying the culinary history of the English speaking world. However, even the seemingly straightforward use of word frequencies in the study of changing culinary terminology (and corresponding changes in eating habits) may be more problematic than first assumed. Since the corpus used includes both American and British books (as well as English language books published in other countries) it is difficult to know to what extent the graphs are a faithful reflection of American eating habits. Are *hamburgers* and *ice cream* equally frequent in American and British books (and are *fish and*

chips?). In order to answer these questions we would need separate corpora for British and American books. In other words, in order to use a text corpus to study lexical changes, one needs to assume that the texts in the corpus all reflect the language of the same speech community. However, since we know that the US and Britain have different food cultures (and terminologies), putting texts from both English speaking regions together in one corpus will eventually obscure important regional differences and make it difficult to relate the frequency curves in fig. 7 directly to changes in eating habits.

According to Michel et al. (2010) fig. 8 shows us that the use of the word slavery “peaked during the Civil War (early 1860s) and then again during the civil rights movement (1955-1968)” (Michel et al. 2010:176). The existence of frequency peaks at these two points in history does indeed seem to be related to contemporary political events. Nevertheless, since Michel et al. only study strings of letters and combinations of strings of letters (called n-grams)⁴⁹ regardless of their contextual meanings, questions remains about the nature of the curve in figure 8. In addition to referring to the ‘institution of slavery,’ the word *slavery* also has metaphorical and extended uses, e.g., *slavery of the clock*, *slavery of money*, *slavery of mortgage debt*, *slavery of sin* (a frequent phrase in the English Bible⁵⁰), *slavery of fear*, *slavery of alcohol*, *slavery of drugs*, etc. The sheer number of such phrases suggests that a substantial proportion of the tokens being graphed in 1B do not refer to the institution of slavery. Thus while it is interesting to observe peaks in the use of the word *slavery* without taking word meaning into consideration, the value of such data is undermined by the uncertainty about diachronic distribution of the various meanings of the word. Thus, as mentioned in section 1.4 above, using lexical semantic analysis

⁴⁹ Michel et al. (2010:1-2) define n-gram as follows: “A 1-gram is a string of characters uninterrupted by a space; this includes words (‘banana’, ‘SCUBA’) but also numbers (‘3.14159’) and typos (‘excess’). An n-gram is sequence of 1-grams, such as the phrases ‘stock market’ (a 2-gram) and ‘the United States of America’ (a 5-gram). We restricted n to 5, and limited our study to n-grams occurring at least 40 times in the corpus.”

⁵⁰ See Crystal (2010).

to divide tokens of the same word into different categories based on contextual meaning vastly increases the precision and value of statistical data, which in turn enables the formulation of more explanatory hypotheses about the link between lexical and historical changes.

A third limitation of ‘culturomics’ as it is currently formulated is that it lacks specific theoretical frameworks in which to interpret statistical data and to capture the connection between linguistic usage patterns and historical changes in the socio-political context. The culturomic studies provided in Michel et al. (2010) do little more than juxtapose lexical and historical changes, expecting the reader to understand the link intuitively. While I fully endorse the idea of using rigorous quantitative methods to study history through lexical changes, I suggest we need explicitly formulated theories of historical and cultural phenomena in which to interpret statistical data. That is, beyond just counting tokens, the framework of lexicalized metaculture proposed here relies on theories of lexicalization and metaculture to *explain* the emergence of metacultural terminology in early China as a historical phenomenon. Thus the combination of theories of corpus linguistics, lexical semantics, metaculture, and lexicalization outlined in this dissertation provides a fine-tuning of the ‘culturomic’ framework, which enables us to interpret statistical word counts and relate them to historical studies of changes in the conceptualization of identity and cultural awareness.

In sum, on its own the culturomics framework proposed in Michel et al. (2010) consists of little more than the application of statistical analysis of lexical patterns in diachronic corpora. Geoffrey Nunberg may thus to a certain extent be right in calling it “almost embarrassingly crude.”⁵¹ However, this does not mean that we should abandon this kind of research. On the contrary, we stand to gain a lot by using data obtained from textual corpora. However, in order to live up to its name and to allow us to contextualize the lexicon as a source in the study of

⁵¹ See Luxon (12/17/2010). See also Nunberg (12/16/2010).

‘cultural history,’ culturomics needs to be furnished with theories of lexicalized metaculture and lexical semantics. In sum, to get reliable data we need to spell-out our assumptions about the lexicon and its relationship to the linguistic community supporting it and the historical context in which it is used to produce texts. And in order to interpret lexical data and link it to the larger historical context we need explicitly formulated theoretical frameworks of ‘culture,’ ‘religion,’ ‘political history,’ or whatever other cultural phenomena are to be studied. In other words, lexicalized metaculture is fundamentally a historical problem rather than a linguistic or statistical problem.

1.7 Nature and composition of the pre-Qín corpus

In addition to the new methodology combining theories of metaculture and lexical semantics, using a corpus-based approach to changes in intellectual history represents another novel aspect of the approach adopted here. While earlier studies of identity in pre-Qín China have analyzed the use of a number of the key terms involved, they are usually either limited to a few selected texts or handpicked examples. In contrast, the data on which the present study of the vocabulary of identity and metaculture is based comes from a comprehensive corpus including most of the extant written material from the pre-Qín period. In contrast to the enormous Google databases used in the culturomics studies discussed above, the total amount of textual material from the pre-Qín period consists of a relatively manageable number of texts and inscriptions, many of which have been digitized. While this facilitates the application of corpus-linguistic methods to the study of diachronic lexical change, the small corpus size also makes it less reliable as a faithful representation of actual linguistic usage. For example, the fact that bronze inscriptions make up the bulk of the Western Zhōu (ca. 1045-771 BCE) corpus is probably mostly due to the

durable nature of bronze. It is thus very likely that early Zhōu writings of different types and genres have all perished, leaving the bronze inscriptions as the main representative of Western Zhōu writing. Besides the problems related to small corpora, scholars of early Chinese texts also have to face problems related to the date and authenticity of individual texts, as well as problems related to the fluidity of pre-Qín writing, scribal emendation, and the corruption of transmitted texts.

The dating of many pre-Qín texts is highly controversial. I have tried to circumvent the most problematic issues by sorting texts into two categories of either pre-Zhànguó- or Zhànguó-period texts. The main arguments of this dissertation—that metacultural uses of *wén* arose after the middle of the first millennium BCE—can be tested using this division of texts into two temporal strata (figure 9).

Figure 9. Chronological stratification of texts in the corpus

(I) Texts with Pre-Zhànguó material

Received texts:

Chūnqiū 春秋

Shàngshū 尚書 (pre-Zhànguó parts)

Shī 詩

Zhōuyì 周易 (pre-Zhànguó parts)

Excavated texts:

Oracle bone inscriptions (*OBI*)

Bronze inscriptions (*BI*)

(II) Texts with Zhànguó-period material

Received texts:⁵²

Chǔcǐ 楚辭

Ēryǎ 爾雅

Gōngyángzhuàn 公羊傳

⁵² While the status of the texts listed here as post-500 BCE texts is fairly uncontroversial, the status of a number of them as pre-Qín texts is still a topic of debate. Clearly, most (if not all) of the received texts have been edited, or otherwise modified, by scholars in the Han dynasty (or later), and have been shown to contain post-221 interpolations, scribal errors, and emendations. In spite of this, many received texts can still be argued to contain material composed before 221 BCE.

Guǎnzǐ 管子
Gūliángzhuàn 穀梁傳
Guóyǔ 國語
Hánfēizǐ 韓非子
Lǐjì 禮記
Lúnyǔ 論語
Lǚshì chūnqiū 呂氏春秋
Mèngzǐ 孟子
Mòzǐ 墨子
Shāngjūnshū 商君書
Shàngshū 尚書 (post-500 BCE parts)
Shānhǎijīng 山海經
Shènzǐ 慎子
Shuō yuàn 說苑
Sūnzǐ 孫子
Wúzǐ 吳子
Xúnzǐ 荀子
Yànzǐ chūnqiū 晏子春秋
Yílǐ 儀禮
Yīnwénzǐ 尹文子
Yìzhōushū 逸周書
Zhànguó cè 戰國策
Zuǒzhuàn 左傳⁵³
Zhōulǐ 周禮

Excavated texts:

Guōdiàn Chǔmù zhújiǎn 郭店楚墓竹簡
Qīnghuá dàxué cáng zhànguó zhújiǎn 清華大學藏戰國竹簡
Shànghǎi bówùguǎn cáng zhànguó Chǔ zhúshū 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書

The rough division of texts into pre-Zhànguó- and Zhànguó-period texts allows us to avoid engaging in the often futile speculation about the exact date of composition of pre-Qín texts, most of which are internally complex, having been created by slow accretion of material from different sources over long periods of time. Thus a high degree of precision in the dating of the texts in the corpus is not crucial to the analysis proposed here. What matters is whether the material from which a text is composed dates from before the middle of the first millennium

⁵³ As mentioned in footnote 23 in section 1.2, most material in the *Zuǒzhuàn* probably dates to the fifth century BCE. It does not contain metacultural *sí*, which emerged in the early Zhànguó period. It is therefore classified here as a post-500 BCE text.

BCE, and thus represents pre-Zhànguó thought and society, or whether it dates from after the middle of the first millennium BCE and reflects Zhànguó thought.⁵⁴ For more detailed chronological analyses of the various uses and meanings of *wén* in chapters 2 and 3, I occasionally sub-divide these two strata further.

While the body of texts in figure 9 is not exhaustive, it does include most of the written material from the pre-Qín period.⁵⁵ Since many of the traditional names of ‘works’ refer to compilations of genuine pre-Qín and later material edited in the Han dynasty (or later), it is necessary to determine the age of each sub-part individually. For ease of reference, the traditional book titles have still been used in figure 9. Thus the *Shàngshū* is listed as a pre-Zhànguó text although more than half of it was composed during the Zhànguó period or later.⁵⁶ With oracle bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions, I have mainly relied on the CHANT database. Although this database is not exhaustive, it does contain the vast majority of inscriptions in those media. Important tokens of the words studied here have been compared with printed collections and indices of OBI and BI.

Most of the received (or transmitted) pre-Qín texts were not edited in their present shape until the Han dynasty or later, and many of them contain materials composed by different people at different times. The composition of the *Lúnyǔ* is good example of a highly complex text compiled through accretion over a long period rather than by a single author at single point in

⁵⁴ Note that this approach is similar to the one proposed by Pines (2009). For Pines, the important epistemic shift is the emergence of a notion of a unified empire in the Zhànguó period, before the actual unification of China in 221 BCE. “What matters to [my] study is not the precise date of each textual unit I use, but that all units should be written before the imperial unification and reflect the intellectual milieu of the Warring States” (Pines 2009:6). As pointed out by Pines, one of the advantages of this methodology is that it is better able to “survive the challenges of radical textual skepticism” since its “conclusions are not based on a single text, but on a systematic assessment of the bulk of the extant corpus of pre-imperial literature” (Pines 2009:6).

⁵⁵ I have not systematically included various forms of epigraphy found on seals, coins, jade objects, etc. Nor is the list of excavated bamboo manuscripts exhaustive.

⁵⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the dating of the different parts of the *Shàngshū*, see Nylan (2001) and Qū Wànli 屈萬里(1983).

time. Most of the eponymous works traditionally attributed to important ‘thinkers’ contain different layers of material (in addition to later interpolations and emendations by post-Qin commentators, scribes, and editors). Nevertheless, for the purposes of testing the hypothesis that metacultural *wén* emerged around 500 BCE, classifying a text as either a pre- or post-500 BCE is sufficient. Thus in the case of the *Lúnyǔ*, which contains materials that span most of the Zhànguó period, the fact that it was written down/composed in the centuries after the death of Confucius in 479 BCE makes it possible to classify its content as being post-500 BCE. Again, when more fine-grained analysis is needed, I will rely on the existing scholarship for more precise dating (e.g., placing the first 10 chapters of the *Lúnyǔ* earlier than chapters 16-20 etc.).

1.8 Historical contexts stimulating the production of metaculture

The ultimate goal of the approach of lexicalized metaculture as a historical problem proposed here consists in linking synchronic patterns and diachronic changes in the use and meaning of metacultural terms to wider social and political contexts. The individual members of the community involved in producing and exchanging theories of statecraft and moral philosophy were all anchored in specific political and social contexts; the texts they produced were written with specific audiences in mind. In order to understand why this community felt the need to lexicalize certain metacultural concepts at specific points in time, we need to understand the dynamics of this market of cultural capital and its changing intellectual agendas. Since metaculture is inherently reflexive, it often occurs in contexts of comparison. The self-awareness manifested in metacultural products and their circulation can often be linked to a comparison (either direct or indirect) of the present versus the past, or of ‘self’ versus ‘other.’ Although sharing a comparative element, these two kinds of comparative contexts are best treated

separately as different metaculture-inducing historical contexts. In this section, I will give three examples of how the theory of metaculture can help us identify the historical contexts and conditions which stimulated the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* and *sú* during the Chūnqiū and the Zhànguó periods.

First, metaculture is often generated when comparing the ways of the present with those of the past. Tomlinson's (2009) study of key terms in the metaculture of contemporary Fijian Christianity provides a good example of historical comparison stimulating the production of metaculture. According to Tomlinson, the Fijians' colonial experience⁵⁷ generated a profound feeling of loss of the traditional pre-Christian ways of their ancestors, a loss which continues to serve as fertile ground for metacultural reminiscing about a lost golden age:

Trouble, in Fijian understanding, comes from social disunity, which leads to the loss of power. [...] The ancestors were physically larger than people are today and worked together communally; each knew his or her proper place in the social hierarchy and followed customs respectfully. People in the present are smaller and infected by individualism; those who return to the village after spending time in the city bring disruptive new ideas, and as a result traditional customs are being neglected. The past golden age is a reflection of the present – but an inversion of it, shimmering in a cracked mirror. The present is fragmented by money, which undercuts the authority of traditional chiefs; by democracy, which divides the polity; and by the imitation of foreign cultures. This fragmentation leaves people at the mercy of non-Christian spirits, who still have the strength of the past and use it to curse people in the present. People who suffer from curses attempt to thwart them through prayer and other forms of Christian ritual.

[...] [The Fijians'] vision of a dangerous past and a weakened present are the results of competition between Methodist Church authorities and traditional chiefs. [...] [T]he interactions between Church and chiefs [can be analyzed] as metaculture – as Fijian reflections and commentary on Fijian social processes. (Tomlinson 2009:5-7)

In spite of the obvious differences between present day Fiji and pre-Qín China, this passage does illustrate a few general parallels in the factors involved in the emergence of metaculture, as well as some of the central functions of metacultural discourse. As in present-day Fiji, many Zhànguó

⁵⁷ Fiji became a British colony in 1874 and gained independence in 1970. See Scarr (1984).

‘thinkers’⁵⁸ were nostalgic for the traditional ways of an imagined golden age that, if re-instituted, would provide a solution to contemporary social ills. Conservative ideologies—which conceptualize the present as being in a ‘crisis’ of culture—thus tend to be particularly fertile ground for the production of metacultural statements. Tomlinson (2009) suggests that Fijian Christianity is one such metaculture-producing ideology. In the chapters to follow, I argue that some of the pre-Qín thinkers who identified themselves as followers of Confucius also adhered to a highly metaculture-producing ‘conservative’ ideology. Thus, beyond the general observation that metaculture tends to flourish in periods of (real or perceived) cultural crisis characterized by comparison between past and present, this passage also illustrates that specific manifestations of metaculture always emerge in, and are shaped by, specific historical contexts and traditions. The specific role of historical comparison in pre-Qín metaculture will be fleshed out in the analyses of the emergence of the metacultural concept of *wén* in chapters 2 and 3.

Second, comparison of self and other is another context which is conducive to the production of metaculture. In the Fijian context analyzed by Tomlinson, the colonial encounter with the colonizing ‘other’ is a powerful trigger of metacultural reflection and discourse. Similarly, as will be discussed briefly in chapter 4, metacultural statements in the Zhànguó period often took the shape of explicit comparison of the conventionalized behaviors of self (i.e., the *(Huá)xià* (華)夏inhabitants of the Zhōu realm) versus those of the alien others (e.g., the *yí* 夷

⁵⁸ I use the term ‘thinkers’ as shorthand for the works traditionally attributed to them. Whether these works were produced by a single individual, or even at a specific point in time, is still a topic of debate. Rather than entering this debate I simply limit myself to relatively coherent works (or parts thereof) which are generally recognized to have been composed in the pre-Qín period. Using the term ‘thinker(s)’ also has the advantage of allowing me to avoid more controversial terms such as ‘school of thought’ or the various -isms (e.g. Confucianism, Mohism, Legalism). For discussion of the problems involved in the traditional reference to different pre-Qín ‘schools’ or ‘-isms,’ see Smith (2003), Brashier (2011:5-18), Nylan (2001) and Nylan and Csikszentmihalyi (2003). For problems related to using the terms ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosophers’ when discussing the pre-Qín period, see also Denecke (2010).

‘barbarians’).⁵⁹ To be sure, the specific formulations of metacultural discourse based on comparison of self and other is highly context-specific. Thus, in the Zhànguó period, metacultural statements varied considerably from thinker to thinker, and from context to context.⁶⁰

Third, the lexicalization of metaculture can only take place in a community of individuals interested in formulating and circulating theories in which metacultural concepts play a prominent role. I argue that the specific nature of the lexicalized metaculture of *wén* and *sú* that emerged in post-500 BCE China crucially relied on the rise of a community of individuals interested in producing theories of statecraft and moral philosophy. Thus, the socio-political factors responsible for the emergence of this group of ‘thinkers’ indirectly contributed to the *lexicalization* of *wén* and *sú* as metacultural concepts.

The three contexts described above illustrate how the theory of lexicalized metaculture provides a framework that enables us to contextualize the lexicon as a historical source. By allowing us to formulate specific hypotheses about the socio-political contexts in which metacultural concepts were lexicalized, the theory of lexicalized metaculture goes beyond piecemeal matching of word counts with historical changes. In chapter 4, I will discuss these and other socio-political and intellectual conditions, which contributed to the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* in the second half of the first millennium BCE.

⁵⁹ The translation of *yí* (as well as other Old Chinese terms referring to non-Zhōu groups) is a fiercely debated issue. Liu (2004) argued that *yí* did not have negative connotations before the Opium Wars in the 19th century and should not be translated as ‘barbarian’ in earlier texts. In contrast, Kim (2009) has argued that this translation of *yí* is justified in ancient Chinese texts since it referred to ‘culturally inferior others.’

⁶⁰ For example, the different uses of the term *sú* ‘customs’ in the *Mòzǐ* (where the term is used to describe the conventionalized behaviors of both the Zhōu and the non-Zhōu) as opposed to its use in the *Xunzi* (where the term *lǐ* 禮 ‘rites’ is used for the conventionalized behavior of the Zhōu elites, which he takes to be superior), while the term *sú* is used to refer to the ‘[local] conventionalized behaviors’ of non-Zhōu and non-elite Zhōu.

1.9 Conclusion: Using the lexicon as historical source in studies of pre-Qín metaculture

In this chapter I have outlined a framework for using the lexicon as source in the historical study of the changes in the collectively shared framework for conceptualizing metaculture that took place as part of the many socio-political changes during the five centuries spanning the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó periods. Pre-Qín lexicalized metaculture was the organic outgrowth of the communicative needs of a community of ‘thinkers’ interested in producing theories of statecraft and moral philosophy. Thus lexicalized metaculture needs to be approached through a historical study of the socio-political conditions that contributed to the emergence of this community and their interest in metacultural concepts, as well as of the intellectual milieu in which they formulated and circulated metacultural theories. The flowchart in figure 10 below illustrates how the lexicon is linked on one side to the historical contexts in which it emerged, and on the other to the historical contexts in which it is used.

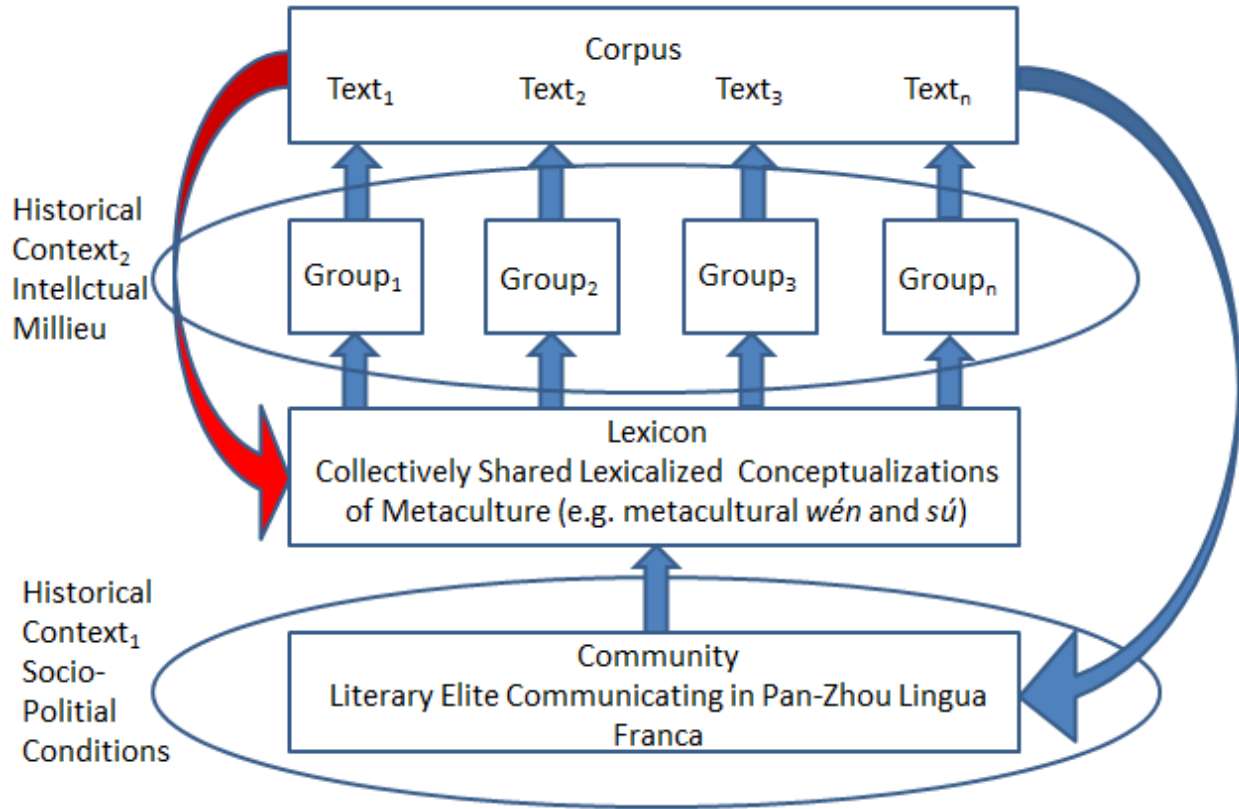


Figure 10. Lexicon as historical source.

Reading the flowchart in figure 10 from the bottom up, we start with the first historical context (context₁) indicated by the lower ellipse. Enclosed in this ellipse is the lower box indicating the community of individuals engaged in formulating and circulating theories of statecraft and moral philosophy in which metacultural concepts played a key role. Throughout the period studied here, i.e., ca. 722-221 BCE, we need to understand the changing socio-political role played by the community of individuals responsible for coining and using metacultural terms. Only by paying close attention to this historical context will we be able to explain what led to the lexicalization of metaculture, indicated by the arrow connecting the “Community” and the shared “Lexicon” (indicated by the second box from the bottom). As discussed above, this process of lexicalization

is fundamentally a diachronic process, which signals a heightened interest in metacultural concepts.

Once a metacultural vocabulary has emerged, it is subsequently used by different individuals and groups. Although they share this vocabulary, these groups (indicated by the small boxes marked “Group₁” to “Group_n”) have different agendas and use these terms in very different ways (e.g., the highly different attitudes towards metacultural *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* and *Hánfēizǐ* discussed above, etc.). Nevertheless the texts they produce (“Text₁” to “Text_n”) all form part of the extant corpus of pre-Qín texts, indicated by the topmost box marked “Corpus.” The different groups of individuals are all part of an intellectual milieu that influences which topics are debated. This intellectual milieu is indicated by the ellipse encircling all the different groups. The lexicalization of metacultural concepts is thus a historical problem not just with respect to the particular economy of cultural capital in which metacultural terms were lexicalized (“Historical Context₁”), but also in the sense that the specific contextual uses of these terms took place in a particular intellectual milieu (“Historical Context₂”).

The corpus (including most of the extant texts from the pre-Qín period) thus contains a wide variety of concrete uses of each metacultural term by various thinkers and groups of thinkers with potentially very different metacultural attitudes. As the blue arrow running from the “Corpus” box to the “Community” box indicates, the usage patterns found in specific texts in turn serve as inspiration for the coinage of new meanings of existing metacultural terms, or the coinage of new terms (e.g., compounds such as *fēngsú* 風俗, *wénlǐ* 文理, etc.) for new concepts.

All the blue arrows in figure 10 represent the circular flow of texts, terms and concepts which is responsible for generating new terms for new concepts (in “Historical Context₁”) or using shared vocabulary from a shared lexicon in the generation of texts (in “Historical

Context₂”). The red arrow from the “Corpus” box to the “Shared Lexicon” box indicates the analytical efforts of later scholars (including myself) to describe the meanings and uses of Old Chinese words based on the ways they are used in the pre-Qín corpus.

Through the community using it, the shared lexicon found in the pre-Qín corpus is intimately linked both to the socio-political context (Context₁) in which it was formed, and to the intellectual milieu (Context₂) in which it is used. It can therefore serve as a valuable source in historical studies of pre-Qín thought. The framework of lexicalized metaculture enables us to draw on the explanatory potential of theories of lexicalization and metaculture to formulate hypotheses about how lexical changes in metacultural terminology (e.g., *wén* and *sú*) in the pre-Qín lexicon reflect changes in the collectively shared conceptualizations of metaculture.

As discussed in section 1.6, the explanatory potential of current formulations of the culturomics approach is limited in that it does not integrate the quantitative study of terms with theories from other fields studying the concepts behind those terms. In order to overcome this shortcoming, my corpus-based study of the historical process of lexicalization of pre-Qín metacultural concepts is informed by Urban’s theory of metaculture. The two aspects of the Urban’s theory of metaculture that are most important for the development of the framework of lexicalized metaculture are: (i) its ability to formulate hypotheses about the nature and speed of changes in metaculture, and (ii) hypotheses about the historical, socio-political and intellectual factors behind changes in metaculture. The theory of lexicalized metaculture studies specific words (e.g., Old Chinese *wén* and *sú*) used in the pre-Qín texts themselves to reflect upon traditions of conventionalized behavior of both Zhōu and non-Zhōu peoples. By doing so it provides a new framework for the study of *language-specific* metacultural awareness. In that respect this theory is fundamentally different from the widespread practice of using a universally

applicable terminology of anthropological theory (including concepts such as ‘culture,’ ‘customs,’ etc.) to study individual societies.

As discussed in section 1.3, the parallels with Jakobson’s discovery of the overlooked ubiquity of metalanguage are helpful. “Like Molière's Jourdain, who used prose without knowing that it was prose, we practice metalanguage without realizing the metalingual character of our statements. Far from being confined to the sphere of science, metalingual operations prove to be an integral part of our verbal activities” (Jakobson 1956:116-117).⁶¹ Similarly, like Jakobson’s Jourdain, many of us (scholars and non-scholars alike, both today and in pre-modern societies) may produce metacultural discourse (e.g., *The Hua and the Rong cook and enjoy food differently*, and *French and German culinary cultures are different*) without knowing that we are engaging in metacultural activity. And many of us may use language-specific crystallizations of the collectively shared conceptualizations of metaculture (e.g., *culture, customs, wén, sú*, etc.) without realizing that these metacultural terms and the concepts behind them are parochial constructions that were lexicalized and used in specific socio-political contexts. The value of the theory of lexicalized metaculture proposed here thus lies in naming otherwise overlooked

⁶¹ In Molière’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Jourdain’s discovery of prose is described as follows:

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN: Et comme l'on parle qu'est-ce que c'est donc que cela?

MAÎTRE DE PHILOSOPHIE: De la prose.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN: Quoi? quand je dis: "Nicole, apportez-moi mes pantoufles, et me donnez mon bonnet de nuit" , c'est de la prose?

MAÎTRE DE PHILOSOPHIE: Oui, Monsieur.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN: Par ma foi! il y a plus de quarante ans que je dis de la prose sans que j'en susse rien, et je vous suis le plus obligé du monde de m'avoir appris cela. (Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, 1670, II, iv)

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN: And when one speaks, what is that then?

PHILOSOPHY MASTER: Prose.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN: What! When I say, "Nicole, bring me my slippers, and give me my nightcap," that's prose?

PHILOSOPHY MASTER: Yes, Sir.

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN: By my faith! For more than forty years I have been speaking prose without knowing anything about it, and I am much obliged to you for having taught me that. (The Middle Class Gentleman, tr. www.gutenberg.org)

phenomena (i.e., the lexicalization and use of metacultural terms) and providing a framework for studying them in their language-specific manifestations in both modern and pre-modern societies.

Chapter 2 From ‘Awe-Inspiringly Beautiful’ to ‘Patterns of conventionalized behavior’:

Historical Development of the Metacultural Concept of *Wén*

The word *wén* 文 as it occurs in pre-Qín texts has been translated a bewildering number of ways: ‘decorative pattern,’ ‘ornament,’ ‘embroidered emblem,’ ‘sign,’ ‘graph,’ ‘writing,’ ‘text,’ ‘literature,’ ‘principle,’ ‘culture,’ ‘cultured,’ ‘civilization’ and ‘civil,’ just to name a few. While the term *wén* does indeed have many contextual meanings, additional layers of confusion have been added by the tendency in the traditional commentarial tradition to project meanings from the Hàn dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), or sometimes much later, into pre-Qín times, and Zhànguó-period meanings into pre-Zhànguó times. This chapter aims to dispel some of this confusion by tracing the historical stages in the development of hitherto neglected uses of *wén* to refer to language-specific conceptualizations of ‘culture’ as ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ over the period from the Western Zhōu (1045-771 BCE) to the end of the Zhànguó period (481-221 BCE).

Most, if not all, studies of *wén* published in English mention (to various degrees) that certain uses of *wén* can be translated as ‘culture.’ Indeed, the quasi-equivalence of *wén* and the English word *culture* has become a widely accepted factoid among translators of early Chinese texts and in the secondary literature on pre-Qín thought and society. One of the most frequently cited instances of *wén* translated as ‘culture’ is *Lúnyǔ* 9.5.

When the Master was threatened in Kuāng, he said: After King **Wén** had died, did *wén* not remain here? If Heaven was going to destroy this *wén* (*sī wén*), those of us dying after [King Wén] would never have been able to participate in this *wén*. And since Heaven has not yet destroyed this *wén*, what can the people of Kuāng do to me? 子畏於匡，曰：文王既沒，文不在茲乎？天之將喪斯文也，後死者不得與於斯文也；天之未喪斯文也，匡人其如予乎？⁶²

The majority of English translations of the *Lúnyǔ* since Lyall (1909:54) render *wén* as ‘culture’ in this passage.⁶³ Waley’s (1938:40) sweeping claim that “*wên* means something like our own word culture and served many of the same purposes” also seems to have exerted great influence over how Western sinologists translate the term.⁶⁴

However, as I will argue here, assuming semantic equivalence between the Old Chinese word *wén* and the Modern English word *culture* is highly problematic. As observed by Kern (2001:51-52, note 26), Peter Bol’s (1992) translation of the expression *sī wén* 斯文 (in *Lúnyǔ* 9.5) as ‘this culture of ours’ may be appropriate for Tang and Song times. Whether it correctly translates the meaning of *sī wén* 斯文 in pre-Qín times is an open question that has so far eluded scholarly attention.⁶⁵ In this chapter I outline an answer to this question by providing an analysis of the chronological development of *wén* in which I discuss the extent to which it is used to refer to language-specific pre-Qín conceptualizations of ‘culture.’

⁶² *Lúnyǔ* 9.5, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:576-9).

⁶³ For a case study of *wén* in English translations of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1791 to 2007, see chapter 5.

⁶⁴ Waley (1938:41) even insists that earlier English translators who did not translate *wén* as ‘culture’ nevertheless “knew it corresponded in a general way to our word ‘culture.’” Thus, he claims that Legge (1861) translated *wén* in *Lúnyǔ* 9.5 as ‘cause of truth’ because he was “embarrassed by the term *wên*” and therefore could not “convince himself that Confucius could have been interested in transmitting anything so frivolous as mere ‘culture.’”

⁶⁵ Previous studies have focused on other aspects of the term. Chow (1979) centers his analysis of *wén* on its uses in expressions referring to ‘writing’ and ‘literature.’ Similarly, Kern (2001) focuses on the use of the term *wénzhāng* to refer to ‘written textual compositions.’ Schaberg (2001a) touches on a number of different meanings of *wén* but is nevertheless focused on its uses in the *Zuǒzhuàn* to refer to rhetorically patterned speech (*wén cí* 文辭). Gawlikowski (1987) and Gawlikowski (1988) contain a study of the *wén* 文 - *wǔ* 武 ‘civil-martial’ dichotomy and its role in political theory. Falkenhausen’s (1996) study of *wén* in Western Zhōu Bronze inscriptions focuses on the uses of *wén* as a positive epithet describing deceased ancestors. Shirakawa (1983) briefly touches on the different attitudes towards the concept of *wén* in pre-Qín works. Péng Yǎfēi 彭亚非 (1996) contains a survey of three main concepts of *wén* in the pre-Qín period. Powers (2006) discusses *wén* in the context of his analysis of the role of patterns in the construction personhood. Finally, Liú Shàoqǐn 刘绍瑾 (2010) analyzes the role of *wén* in pre-Qín theories of aesthetics.

In order to avoid the hermeneutical problems related to using the modern Anglophone category of ‘culture’ in the study of pre-Qín texts, I will analyze the use of *wén* referring to ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior,’ such *Lúnyǔ* 9.5 quoted above, as a metacultural term. As discussed in chapter 1, I use the phrase *metacultural terms* to refer to language-specific expressions, such as the English word *culture* and Old Chinese *wén*, which refer to culture-specific conceptualizations of ‘(sets) of conventionalized behaviors.’

Two of the most prominent meanings of the Modern English metacultural term *culture* are (i) the 19th century notion of ‘high culture’ defined as the universally valid values and practices of human civilization, popularized by Arnold’s (1869) *Culture and Anarchy* among others,⁶⁶ and (ii) the anthropological concept of ‘culture’ defined as the set of transmitted practices of a specific group, as per Tylor (1871) *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*.⁶⁷ Rather than being neutral and universally applicable analytical categories, these parochial concepts of ‘culture’ emerged in particular historical contexts and thus represent collectively shared conceptualizations of specific groups of people with particular agendas in 19th and 20th century Britain and North America.

Similarly, as I will show below, metacultural *wén* (e.g., *Lúnyǔ* 9.5) is also a language-specific term for a culture-specific concept of ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ that

⁶⁶ Matthew Arnold’s (1822-1888) writings played a key role in the popularization of this concept of ‘culture,’ which he understood as the refinement of the mind, tastes, and manners through “acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world” (Arnold 1873). For Arnold, “the best” tradition was the one Western Europe had inherited from ancient Greece and Rome, which he contrasted with what he viewed as the inferior traditions of the rest of the world.

⁶⁷ While a precursor of the use of the term *culture* in this new sense appears in Tylor’s (1871) *Primitive Culture* (as well as in even earlier works), this meaning did not gain currency beyond narrow academic circles until the publication of popular introductions to the anthropological study of cultures and languages by Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead, among others, in the early 20th century. According to Mead (1959) and Masuzawa (1998), Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture* (1934) and *The chrysanthemum and the sword: Patterns of Japanese culture* (1946) played a significant role in making the word *culture* in the anthropological sense part of the vocabulary of the average educated person. For discussion of the complex development the term *culture*, which gave rise to the bewildering mass of uses and meanings in contemporary Modern English, see also Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1960), Masuzawa (1998), Williams (1983) and Bennett, et al. (2005). See section 5.2.2 for a more detailed account of the development of the anthropological concept of ‘culture.’

differs in important ways from Modern English notions of ‘culture.’ The approach proposed here thus allows us to engage in comparative study of metacultural concepts and to trace historical changes in shared conceptual frameworks without having to rely on the Modern English metacultural concept of ‘culture,’ which is, after all, no less parochial and language-specific than the Old Chinese term *wén*.

Rather than providing an exhaustive study of *wén* in the entire pre-Qín corpus, I will focus here on the development of the use of *wén* to refer to ‘patterns of conventionalized behavior’ in the *Shī*, the *Zuǒzhuàn*, the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*.⁶⁸ I use these four texts for two reasons. First, each of them contains enough instances of the term *wén* to reconstruct a coherent theory of its uses and meanings. Second, these texts can be seen as representing the intellectual milieus of four different periods: (i) the *Shī* (ca. 10th to 6th century BCE), (ii) the *Zuǒzhuàn* (ca. early 5th century BCE), (iii) the *Lúnyǔ* (ca. 5th-4th century BCE)⁶⁹, and (iv) the *Xúnzǐ* (ca. 3rd century BCE).⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Rather than using English translations of the titles of pre-Qín texts, I will consistently use pinyin transcriptions of the traditional Chinese titles. For example, I refer to the *Shī* and the *Lúnyǔ* rather than to the English titles, i.e., the *Book of Odes/Songs* and the *Analects*.

⁶⁹ Parts of the *Lúnyǔ* date to the period after the 4th century BCE. In this chapter I focus on the parts that can be argued to date from the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. More discussion of the date and authenticity of each of the texts studied here will be provided below.

⁷⁰ The selection of these four texts is based on a comprehensive survey study of all the occurrences of the word *wén* in received and excavated texts from the pre-Qín period. The *Shī* was selected because it is the only longer pre-Zhànguó text with enough tokens of *wén* to be useful. In contrast, the authentic pre-Zhànguó parts of the *Shàngshū* 尚書, the *Chūnqiū* 春秋 and the *Zhōuyì* 周易 only contain a few relevant tokens. The *Zuǒzhuàn* was chosen because it contains some of the earliest attested examples of *wén* reinterpreted in a moral sense. Similarly, the *Lúnyǔ* is chosen because it contains some of the first examples of metacultural *wén*. The *Xúnzǐ* contains what is probably the most explicitly developed theory of metacultural *wén* in the entire pre-Qín corpus, which makes it the perfect choice of text to represent late-Zhànguó use of metacultural terms.

Except for the fact that the *Xúnzǐ* explicitly places itself in the tradition of the teachings of Kǒngzǐ, as discussed below, and thus, to a certain extent, can be seen as a later development of the theory of *wén* found in the *Lúnyǔ*, the four texts studied here are not assumed to constitute a tradition.

To be sure, other Zhànguó-period texts (e.g., the *Hánfēizǐ* and the *Lǚshì Chūnqiū*, etc.) could have been chosen as well. But they either discuss *wén* polemically, or use the term less consistently. The same arguments apply to the material in the *Guōdiàn Chǔmù zhújiǎn* 郭店楚墓竹簡, *Qīnghuá dàxué cáng zhànguó zhújiǎn* 清華大學藏戰國竹簡, *Shànghǎi bówùguǎn cáng zhànguó Chǔ zhúshū* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 collections of recently discovered manuscripts, see Jīngmén shì bówùguǎn 荆门市博物馆 (1998), Lǐ Xuéqín 李學勤 (2010) and Mǎ Chéngyuán 馬承源 (2001).

This chapter contributes to our understanding of the term *wén* in two ways. First, in section 2.1, I argue that metacultural uses of *wén* did not exist in the pre-Zhànguó period. I also show that pre-Zhànguó uses of *wén* referring to positive attributes of individuals of noble or royal birth meant ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful,’ rather than ‘accomplished,’ as proposed by Falkenhausen (1996), and that these uses of *wén* derive from the more basic meaning ‘decorative pattern’ through regular lexical processes of metaphorical extension and abstraction. This chapter provides an analysis of pre-Zhànguó uses of the term *wén* as referring mainly to physical appearance rather than acquired moral traits and offers new insight into the social importance of externally visible beauty in early Zhōu society.

Second, in section 2.2, I show that, as far as we can tell from our sources, metacultural uses of *wén* referring to the abstract concept of ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ (e.g., *Lúnyǔ* 9.5 discussed above) emerged around the middle of the first millennium BCE.⁷¹ This process can be divided into three steps. First, the pre-Zhànguó adjectival meaning ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ became reinterpreted in moral terms and started to refer to the ‘moral refinement’ of individuals. Second, adjectival *wén* in the meaning ‘morally refined’ started to be used to describe entire dynasties. Third, *wén* started to be used as a noun referring to the abstract concept of the ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ of an entire dynasty or of social practices in general. By providing a chronology of these changes, I am able to avoid the anachronistic interpretations of *wén* proposed in the commentarial tradition that continue to influence the way contemporary sinologists translate the term.

⁷¹ Of course, although I claim that abstract uses of *wén* as a metacultural concept only emerged around the middle of the first millennium BCE, I am obviously not implying that people in the earlier period were unable to think in abstract concepts. In other words, it is important to separate the historical development of word meanings from the evolution of human cognitive abilities.

2.1 From decorated object to ‘decorated’ person: the ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ appearance of the pre-Zhànguó Zhōu nobleman

Metacultural uses of the term *wén* are not attested in the corpus of texts prior to the Zhànguó-period.⁷² The three main attested uses are: (a) as a word referring to concrete decorative patterns on physical objects, (b) as a word referring to rank-indicating embroidered emblems on garments and flags and (c) as a word meaning ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ and used in expressions referring to ancestors and in posthumous titles. In this section, I briefly describe these three attested uses of *wén* and argue that (b) derives from (a), and (c) derives from (b). I also argue that the uses of *wén* as meaning ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ constitute a pre-Zhànguó precursor of later Zhànguó-period metacultural uses of the term.

Wén occurs in the basic meaning ‘decorative pattern’ in a few passages in the pre-Zhànguó corpus. A typical example is the poem “Xiǎo Róng” (Máo 128) in the *Shī*, which contains a long description of war chariots that, among other attributes, have ‘patterned-decorated (*wén*) floor-mats’ (*wén yīn* 文茵).⁷³ In the *Shì míng* 釋名, a lexicographic work from the Eastern Hàn, *wényīn* 文茵 is defined as “being made from tiger skin and having patterned colorings (*wén cǎi* 文采) 用虎皮，有文采。”⁷⁴ Concluding with certainty that the meaning of *wényīn* 文茵 is ‘striped tiger skin chariot cushion’ may be impossible. However, since it appears in a passage describing a war chariot, it is clear that it must refer to some kind of externally visible decoration. It is thus not impossible that it may have referred to a ‘striped tiger skin cushion’ as suggested in the *Shì míng*.

⁷² In addition to the pre-Zhànguó parts of the *Shī*, the *Shū* 書, the *Chūnqiū* 春秋 and the *Zhōuyì* 周易, the corpus of pre-Zhànguó texts analyzed here also includes the oracle-bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions in the CHANT database (<http://www.chant.org/>).

⁷³ Máo 128, *SSJZS* (1980:370). In this chapter I refer to poems in the *Shī* by their number according to the Máo edition.

⁷⁴ *Shì míng* 24.29, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (2008:254).

The use of the word *wén* to refer to rank-indicating emblems—which consisted of ‘embroidered patterns’—derives directly from the basic meaning of ‘decorative pattern.’ Máo 177 contains a description of woven (*zhī* 織) patterned markings [of rank] (*wén*) on flags: “[the flags] have woven pattern-emblems (*wén*) and bird insignia, and the white banners were brilliant” (織文鳥章，白旆央央).⁷⁵ Thus, ‘emblems’ (*wén*) were simply a special kind of institutionalized embroidered ‘decorative pattern’ (*wén*).⁷⁶

I suggest that the use of *wén* to refer to rank-marking decorative patterns on emblems gave rise to the use of *wén* to refer to people of high rank—who would have carried status-indicating emblems (*wén*) on their robes—as ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ through metaphorical extension. A similar metaphorical extension from a word referring to physical decorations to a more abstract term referring to high rank, status, or honor is exemplified by the English term *decorated*, as in *MacArthur is a highly decorated officer*. Máo 299 contains a passage that provides support for the reading of *wén* as ‘awe-inspiring’ in the pre-Zhànguó period.

Solemn, solemn is the Marquis of Lü. Respectfully bright [is] his charismatic power. Respectful and careful, having awe-inspiring dignity (*wēi* 威) and deportment, he is a model to the people. Truly **awe-inspiringly beautiful** (*wén* 文)! Truly martial! He shines upon his resplendent ancestors. 穆穆魯侯、敬明其德。敬慎威儀、維民之則。允文允武、昭假烈祖。⁷⁷

In this passage the ruler of Lü is described as being “respectful and careful, having awe-inspiring dignity (*wēi*) and deportment” (敬慎威儀) in parallel to his attributes of being “truly awe-inspiringly beautiful (*wén*) and truly martial” (允文允武). Although this juxtaposition of *wén*

⁷⁵ Máo 299, *SSJZS* (1980:425). According to Zhèng Xuán (127-200), “*zhī* 織 refers to a woven emblem [in this passage]” 織徽織也 (*SSJZS* 1980:425).

⁷⁶ The term *zhāng* 章, which often occur in juxtaposition with *wén* referring to ‘emblem(s),’ refers to ‘rank-indicating insignia.’ Beginning in the Zhànguó period, the two words often occur together in the compound expression *wénzhāng* 文章, which refers to either: (i) ‘emblems and insignia,’ or (ii) more broadly to colorful and highly ornamented chariots, clothes, banners, flags and other status-indicating objects.

⁷⁷ Máo 299, *SSJZS* (1980:611).

and *wēi* 威, ‘dignified, imposing, awe-inspiring,’ does not in itself prove that the two expressions have similar meanings, it nevertheless indicates that they have compatible and thus potentially overlapping meanings.

In addition to being ‘awe-inspiring,’ members of the royal family or high nobility, i.e., the lords/princes/noblemen (*jūnzǐ* 君子), were often described as having a beautiful external appearance, being dressed in beautiful robes, and being equipped with beautifully fashioned and decorated objects. The following passage from Máo 55 illustrates the impressive and ‘beautiful’ external appearance of the ‘lord’ (*jūnzǐ*) that indicates his social status and authority and inspires awe and respect in the beholder.

Elegant⁷⁸ is **the lord**, he is as if cut, as if polished; as if carved, as if ground. How bright, how beautiful, how majestic, how splendid! Elegant is **the lord**, his ears are [decorated with] jewels and precious stones. His fastened cap is bright like stars. [...] Elegant is **the lord**, like bronze, like tin, like a jade tablet, like a jade disc. How magnanimous, how generous! 有匪君子，如切如磋，如琢如磨。瑟兮僩兮，赫兮咺兮。有匪君子，充耳琇瑩。會弁如星。[...] 有匪君子，如金如錫，如圭如璧。寬兮綽兮。⁷⁹

This passage illustrates that physical appearance played an important role in the construction of social hierarchies in the pre-Zhànguó period in ways that seem alien from a modern perspective. The passage from Máo 55 quoted above describes the physical beauty of the lord and his accessories, and it compares him to precious metals and jade artifacts. In other words, the beholder knows that the lord is the lord because he is as physically beautiful as a polished piece of jade, and because he wears robes with ‘emblems’ (*wén*) and is equipped with rank-indicating accoutrements. In other words, when the term *wén* is used to describe individuals in the pre-Zhànguó corpus, it refers to the ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ external appearance of members of

⁷⁸ I am following Xiàng (1986:106) and Schuessler (1987:160) in reading *fěi* 匪 as *fěi* 斐 ‘elegant, ornate.’

⁷⁹ Máo 55, *SSJZS* (1980:321), tr. adapted from Karlgren (1974:37).

the ruling elite. The preoccupation with physical beauty and the social importance of being ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ in pre-Zhànguó Zhōu society seems to have been overlooked in previous studies of the term *wén*. I propose that pre-Zhànguó uses of *wén* to describe people refer primarily to the property of being ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ by having externally visible concrete markers of status and authority.

The use of *wén* in expressions referring to ancestors and posthumous titles accounts for the majority of all pre-Zhànguó occurrences of *wén* in the meaning ‘awe-inspiring.’ Examples of *wén* used as a positive adjective modifying expressions referring to ancestors include: ‘awe-inspiring [late] father’ (*wén kǎo* 文考) and ‘awe-inspiring ancestor’ (*wén zǔ* 文祖).⁸⁰ Posthumous titles are name-like appellations given to high-status individuals after death.⁸¹ They are composed of a descriptive term, e.g., *wén* 文 ‘awe-inspiring’, *wǔ* 武 ‘martial,’ *chéng* 成 ‘successful,’ etc., modifying an expression referring to either (i) a title, e.g., *wáng* 王 ‘king,’ *gōng* 公 ‘ruler, duke,’ etc., (ii) a noun indicating family seniority, e.g., *bó* 伯 ‘senior (uncle),’ *shū* 叔 ‘junior (uncle),’ etc., or (iii) the term *zǐ* 子 ‘son, prince, master.’⁸² As observed by Falkenhausen (1996), the context in which these expressions occur in bronze inscriptions—

⁸⁰ See Falkenhausen (1996) for a more complete list of expressions modified by *wén*.

⁸¹ There is significant disagreement as to when the system of posthumous names (*shì fǎ* 謚法) developed, see Wāng Shòukuān 汪受寬 (1995). According to the “*Shì fǎ jiě* 謚法解 (lit. ‘Explanation of the system of posthumous names’)” chapter in the *Yì Zhōu shū* 逸周書, the Duke of Zhōu established the system in the 11th century BCE (Huáng 黃, et al. 2007:618-707). In more recent times, Wáng Guówéi 王國維 (1987:895-96) places the origin of the *shì fǎ* 謚法 system in the middle of the Western Zhōu period, while Guō Mòruò 郭沫若 (1954:89a-101b) argues that it dates from the Zhànguó period. Here I follow Falkenhausen’s (1996) proposal that an incipient form of posthumous naming existed in the late Shāng period and was further developed in the Western Zhōu period. In oracle bone inscriptions, the term *wén* 文 is found in the compound epithet *wén wǔ* 文武, which is used to modify the celestial-stem-based royal name Dīng 丁, e.g., *wén wǔ Dīng* 文武丁 “awe-inspiringly beautiful and martial Dīng,” see Keightley (1978). Although *wén* and *wǔ* do form a pair of opposite terms in the Zhànguó period, as suggested by Gawlikowski (1987-8) among others, in the pre-Zhànguó period they refer to two positive descriptors of high-status individuals. It would therefore be anachronistic to project the Zhànguó dichotomy between *wén* and *wǔ* into the early Zhōu period.

⁸² In bronze inscriptions, *wén* is only found with the first set of terms. In contrast, the received pre-Zhànguó texts contain *wén*-based posthumous names with terms from all three sets.

which seldom amount to more than a laconic dedication ‘to our awe-inspiring [late] father’—do not allow us to determine the exact meaning of *wén*. Falkenhausen (1996:3) tentatively adopts ‘accomplished’ as a stopgap translation.

Although I agree with Falkenhausen that we should be careful not to presume to know the exact meaning of *wén*, I suggest that ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ is a better translation than ‘accomplished.’ The translation ‘accomplished’ obscures the semantic link between the basic meaning of *wén* as ‘externally visible decorative pattern’ and its metaphorical use to describe the externally visible ‘decorative patterns’ (on the emblems [*wén*] on garments and decorated [*wén*] accoutrements) of a high-status ‘awe-inspiring’ (*wén*) ancestor or deceased ruler. As mentioned above, this metaphorical use of *wén* is akin to the Modern English use of the adjective *decorated* to refer to military rank. That is, just as the medals and honors physically carried by a ‘decorated soldier’ indicated his rank and status, so did the physical appearance of a Zhōu king or aristocrat (i.e., embroidered clothes, carved jade objects, etc.) constitute the external ‘decoration’ (*wén*) that indicates his awe-inspiring dignity (*wēi*) and authority. However, unlike a ‘decorated soldier,’ the high status of the Zhōu royal family and high nobility derived more from birthrights than from ‘accomplishments.’ The quality of being *wén* was not due to an accumulation of deeds (and even less the result of a long process of moral edification), but rather it was a function of who one *was*, i.e., one’s social status as manifested in visible markers of status and wealth.⁸³

The translation of *wén* as ‘accomplished’ is also problematic because it appears to derive from the tendency in much of the Chinese exegetical tradition to project later ‘moralizing’ interpretations of *wén* as ‘morally refined’ into pre-Zhànguó texts. An important contribution of

⁸³ One might object to analyzing *wén* as referring to the visible markers of status and wealth of deceased people since people who are long dead and buried are no longer physically visible to their descendants. Since I do not want to go into lengthy discussions of early Zhōu theories of death and the afterlife, I will simply assume that people can still imagine the visual appearance of their dead ancestors.

Falkenhausen (1996) is to establish that the uses of *wén* in pre-Zhànguó posthumous names and expressions referring to ancestors did not have the “moralizing dimension” that they began to acquire in later texts, such as the *Zuǒzhuàn* and the *Lúnyǔ*. Nevertheless, and somewhat paradoxically, Falkenhausen’s suggested “stopgap” translation of *wén* in bronze inscriptions as ‘accomplished’ is also used by Legge (1861) to translate adjectival *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ*.⁸⁴ Since Legge produced his translations with the help of Chinese scholars, it is highly plausible that his translation of *wén* was inspired by the Chinese commentarial tradition in which *wén* is often assumed to mean ‘**acquired** moral refinement.’ As will be shown in section 2, this was indeed one of the meanings of the term in Zhànguó period texts such as the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. In these texts, translating *wén* as ‘(morally) accomplished’—as Legge often does—is thus justified in some contexts. However, as a translation of *wén* in pre-Zhànguó texts, ‘accomplished’ is anachronistic.

Although little or no evidence in pre-Zhànguó texts supports interpreting *wén* in abstract metacultural or moralizing terms, such anachronistic interpretations still abound. Let us first consider the occurrence of the expression *wén dé* 文德 ‘awe-inspiring charismatic power’⁸⁵ in the last stanza of Máo 262: “Bright, bright is the Son of Heaven. His good reputation is endless. By displaying his awe-inspiring (*wén*) charismatic power (*dé*), he ruled the states [of the] four [quarters]” (明明天子，令聞不已；矢其文德，洽此四國).⁸⁶ From the preceding stanzas of

⁸⁴ In turn, Legge is probably inspired by Collie’s (1970 [1828]) translations of *wén* as ‘ornamental accomplishment(s)’ and ‘accomplished’ in similar contexts. In his list of works consulted, Legge (1861:135) lists Intorcetta, et al. (1687), Marshman (1809) and Collie (1828). As argued in chapter 5, Legge follows Marshman (1809) in translating *wén* as ‘regulations’ in *Lúnyǔ* 3.14 and as ‘learning’ in *Lúnyǔ* 6.27, and he follows Collie (1828) in translating *wén* as ‘learning’ in *Lúnyǔ* 9.11, as ‘ornamental accomplishments’ in *Lúnyǔ* 12.8, and as ‘accomplished’ in *Lúnyǔ* 14.18.

⁸⁵ The glosses in quotation marks, such as ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful,’ etc., are only intended as approximations used for convenience. As argued in this dissertation, detailed semantic analysis of the use of Old Chinese terms in a range of different contexts is needed to be able to reconstruct their semantic fields. In other words, it is important not to confuse the meaning of Old Chinese terms with their English translations.

⁸⁶ Máo 262, *SSJZS* (1980:574).

this ode, which describe the Son of Heaven’s military might and his successes in suppressing the non-Zhōu enemies and securing his domain, we learn about a military official Hǔ, who was rewarded for his efforts on the battlefield. In return, as described in the stanza quoted above, Hǔ extols the ‘awe-inspiring charismatic power’ (*wéndé*) of the Son of Heaven. Given the emphasis on military exploits in this poem, Karlgren’s (1974:234) translation of *wéndé* as ‘fine virtue’ is somewhat awkward. Waley’s (1996:281) translation of *wéndé* as ‘power of governance’ is also problematic since it is difficult to justify translating *wén* as ‘governance.’ Finally, Legge’s (1876:344) translation of *wéndé* as ‘civil virtue’ bears the heaviest imprint of anachronistic interpretations inspired by the commentarial tradition, which projects Zhànguó-period metacultural meanings of *wén* into the Western Zhōu period.⁸⁷ The translation of *wén* as ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ proposed here thus represents an improvement over previous interpretations since it is grounded in an analysis of the social importance of external appearance in Western Zhōu times. It also has the added benefit of being based on the meaning of *wén* in posthumous titles and descriptions of ancestors.

The meaning of *wéndé* given in the *Shījīng Dictionary* (*Shījīng cídiǎn*) is a typical example from the Chinese commentarial tradition of imposing later abstract meanings of *wéndé* onto pre-Zhànguó texts: “*Wéndé* refers to using the transformative teachings of rites and music to engage in the governing [of the state]. It is used in contrast to ‘military accomplishments’” 以礼乐教化进行统治。对“武功”而言 (Xiàng Xī 向熹 1986:485). The problem with this definition is that there is little or no evidence to support interpreting the expression *wéndé* to refer to ‘ruling through charismatic virtue and moral education’ prior to the Zhànguó period.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ According to Qu Wanli (1983:334), *Shī* 262 was composed during the reign of King Xuān of Zhōu (r. 827/25-782).

⁸⁸ A late-Zhànguó-period example of the expression *wéndé* in the moral sense of ‘morally refined virtue’ can be found in *Lúnyǔ* 16.1, where the ruler is described as being able to make people travel from far away regions to

The contrast between ruling through ‘charismatic virtue/power’ (*wén*) and ‘military prowess’ (*wǔ*) also does not pre-date the Zhànguó period.⁸⁹ Although he does not list his sources, the editor of the *Shījīng Dictionary* most likely found inspiration for his anachronistic definition of *wéndé* in the Chinese commentarial tradition, which often projects concepts from the Hàn or even post-Hàn periods backwards into the pre-Qín and pre-Zhànguó periods.

Finally, let us return to the question of whether the metacultural uses of *wén* can, or should, be translated as ‘culture’ or ‘cultured’ in pre-Zhànguó texts. A typical example is Puett’s (2001:29) translation of the phrase *sī wén Hòu Jì* 思文后稷 in Máo 275 as ‘that cultured *Hòu Jì*.’⁹⁰ There are several reasons why such translations should be avoided. First, pre-Zhànguó texts do not contain any evidence for ethical or metacultural interpretations of *wén*. Second, as argued above, it is possible to link pre-Zhànguó uses of *wén* to early Zhōu assumptions of a connection between social status and having an ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ (*wén*) external appearance. Hence, I suggest that the occurrence of *wén* in this passage describes *Hòu Jì* as ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ in his majestic appearance.⁹¹

In sum, *wén* in pre-Zhànguó texts meant something quite different from the English words *cultured*, *civil* and *accomplished*. First, only noblemen (or noblewomen) were described as *wén* either during their lifetime or as ancestors in expressions such as *wén kao* ‘awe-inspiring [late] father’ and posthumous titles such as *Wén Gōng* ‘awe-inspiring [late] Duke.’ Since *wén* was reserved for people of aristocratic descent, it was not seen as an acquired feature as much as

submit to him simply by ‘cultivating his moral virtue’ (*xiū wéndé* 修文德), see Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:1137). For discussion of the dating of *Lúnyǔ* 16 to the late Zhànguó period, see footnote 47.

⁸⁹ See also Gawlikowski (1987-8).

⁹⁰ According to Qu Wanli (1983:334), Máo 275 was composed sometime during the reigns of the Duke of Zhōu (r. 1042-1036) and King Chéng (r. 1042/35-1006).

⁹¹ Waley (1996:295) renders this line “Mighty are you, Hou Ji.” Karlgren (1974:243) has “Fine are you, Hou Tsi.” Both translations are better than the stopgap translation ‘accomplished’ suggested by Falkenhausen (1996) since they allude to the ‘awe-inspiring’ visual appearance of *Hòu Jì*.

a birthright. It thus differs from the English word *cultured*, which refers to a trait acquired through long years of study or training. Second, the word *wén*—which in its most basic meaning refers to ‘decorative patterns’—is much more grounded in the physical appearance of the person described (his clothes, accoutrements, etc.) than the English word *cultured*.⁹² Thus, while taking certain uses of *wén* to mean ‘beautiful’ seems quite justified, as argued above, it is hard to think of any contexts in which the word *cultured* might mean ‘beautiful’ in its most basic sense. Third, the meaning ‘awe-inspiring’ is certainly not readily associated with the English word *culture(d)*. While I might be in awe over someone’s culture—in the 19th-century senses of refinement of manners (which may include the way he or she dresses) and thought—this is still quite different from the awe that a Western Zhōu ruler or noblemen wearing ‘emblems’ (*wén*) and standing on his beautifully ‘decorated’ (*wén*) chariot would inspire in someone at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

2.2 Emergence of metacultural *wén* after the middle of the first millennium BCE

In the previous section, I showed that metacultural uses of *wén* are not attested in the pre-Zhànguó corpus and that *wén* was used literally to refer to concrete ‘decorative patterns’ on physical objects, or metaphorically to refer to ‘decorated’ people in the sense of people who bear the externally observable marks of high rank and authority and thus appear ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful.’ While these older uses continued into the Zhànguó period, *wén* in the sense ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ underwent a reinterpretation and was increasingly used to refer to the externally observable patterns in the appearance and behavior of the morally edified individual.

⁹² This is not to say that uses of the word *cultured* in the 19th century did not also include references to certain dress codes. However, there still seems to be a significant difference between pre-Zhànguó *wén* and *cultured* in this respect.

In other words, the pre-Zhànguó uses of *wén* in the sense ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ refer to the externally observable appearance of the people at the top of the **social** hierarchy. In contrast, the Zhànguó uses of *wén* in the sense ‘morally perfected’ refer to the charismatic appearance of the people at the top of a **moral** hierarchy.

This coining of new meanings of the term *wén* happened in parallel to the coining of new meanings of the term *jūnzǐ* 君子. The term *jūnzǐ* is composed of the words *jūn* 君 ‘lord’ and *zǐ* 子 ‘son’ and literally means ‘the lord’s son.’ In a more extended meaning it refers to ‘noblemen,’ i.e., members of the ruling elite and hereditary nobility in general. Around the middle of the first millennium BCE the term also came to be used in a new sense to refer to ‘noble men’ in the sense of people who are morally superior, regardless of whether they were of noble birth.⁹³ This development can first be traced in the *Zuǒzhuàn*, where both meanings are equally present. In the *Lúnyǔ* the moral readings become more prominent. Finally, in the *Xúnzǐ*, ‘morally perfected’ becomes the dominant meaning of adjectival *wén* used to describe individuals, and uses of *wén* as a noun referring to the ‘(ideal) patterns of conventionalized behavior’ become fully established in the collectively shared vocabulary of the Zhōu literary elite.

⁹³ For a discussion of the shift in the meaning of the term *jūnzǐ* from ‘nobleman’ in an aristocratic sense, to ‘noble man’ in a moral or ethical sense that took place at around the middle of the first millennium BCE, see Morton (1971). Although Morton (1971:69-70) attributes the new use of the term *jūnzǐ* to Kǒngzǐ himself, it is probably more likely that the new use reflects changes in the common linguistic usage in a segment of the literate population. In other words, if we had a broader range of written material from that period, we would likely find other instances of the term *jūnzǐ* used in a moral or ethical sense.

2.2.1 The *Zuǒzhuàn*: The beginnings of moral interpretations of *wén*

The *Zuǒzhuàn*, which I assume to have been composed in the early 5th century BCE, represents a later intellectual milieu than that of the *Shī* and contains some of the earliest evidence of a reinterpretation of *wén* in moral terms.⁹⁴ In this section, I will discuss examples that show that adjectival uses of *wén* in the *Zuǒzhuàn* retained the older pre-Zhànguó meanings of ‘awe-inspiring’ and ‘beautiful,’ while at the same time developing new interpretations in moral terms.

That *wén* could still mean something akin to ‘beautiful’ at the time of the *Zuǒzhuàn* is supported by passages which juxtapose *wén* and expressions meaning ‘elegant’ and ‘beautiful.’ “Xiāng” 31.10 describes how people were selected for government offices based on their abilities (*néng* 能). In the list of individuals selected, one of whom is described as ‘able to decide great affairs’ (*néng duàn dà shì* 能斷大事), a person called Zǐ-Tàishū is described as being selected because he was ‘was beautiful, elegant, and *wén*’ (*měi xiù ér wén* 美秀而文).⁹⁵ This description indicates that the property of being *wén* was compatible with and potentially overlapped with the property being ‘beautiful’ (*měi* 美).

The *Zuǒzhuàn* also contains evidence that supports the hypothesis that *wén* could mean ‘awe-inspiring.’ In “Xiāng” 31.13 we learn that during a visit to the state of Chǔ, Běigōng Wénzǐ 北宮文子 observed that the chief minister of Chǔ was beginning to behave like the ruler of a state. Nevertheless, Běigōng Wénzǐ concluded from the chief minister’s lack of ‘dignity and

⁹⁴ The dating of the composition of the material in the *Zuǒzhuàn*, as well as when it was edited in its present forms, is a highly controversial topic. While I agree with Pines (2009) that some of the content was composed at the end of the Chūnqiū and the beginning of the Zhànguó period, I also agree with Schaberg’s (2001) conclusion that certain parts of the text must have been composed and added much later. Based on lexical and grammatical usage patterns, I date the composition of the bulk of the content of the *Zuǒzhuàn* to the fifth century BCE. See also Cheng (1993a), Felber (1966), Karlgren (1926a), Pines (2002b), Pines (2002c), Vogelsang (2007) and Yáng Bójùn 楊伯峻 (1979).

⁹⁵ *Zuǒ*, Xiāng 31.1, Yáng 楊 (1990:1191).

deportment’ (*wēi yí* 威儀) that he would not succeed in his schemes. To prove his point, Běigōng Wénzǐ expounds on the qualities necessary to be the ruler of a state. To give his arguments scriptural support, he quotes a passage from Máo 299, which describes the ruler of Lǚ as “respectful and careful about maintaining his awe-inspiring dignity and deportment (*wēi yí* 威儀), a model to the people” (敬慎威儀、維民之則). Although he only quotes this line, we know from the discussion of Máo 299 in section 2.1 that the passage also describes the ruler of Lǚ as being “truly awe-inspiringly beautiful and truly martial’ (*yǔn wén yǔn wǔ* 允文允武). This juxtaposition of *wén* and *wēi* 威 ‘dignified, imposing, awe-inspiring’ in Máo 299 indicates that their meanings overlapped. By citing Máo 299, Běigōng Wénzǐ is thus implying that he assumes both ‘dignity and deportment’ (*wēi yí*) and *wén* to be necessary attributes of a true ruler. In the remainder of the Xiāng 31.13 passage, Běigōng Wénzǐ elaborates on these attributes in a way that connects *wén* even more explicitly to the properties of having ‘awe-inspiring dignity’ (*wēi*) and being held in awe (*wèi* 畏).

King **Wén** led a military campaign against Chóng. Twice he drove [his chariots] there and made [people] surrender and become his subjects; and the Mán-Yí⁹⁶ generals submitted. This can be called standing in awe (*wèi* 畏) of him. [...]

Till this day the acts of King **Wén** are a model: this is what is called emulating him. King Wén had awe-inspiring dignity (*wēi* 威) and deportment (*yí* 儀).

Thus when a nobleman (/noble man), while in office, is held in awe (*wèi* 畏); [...] and when his movements and stirrings have **patterns** (*wén*) and his utterances and sayings have ‘decorative flourishes’ (*zhāng* 章) and he uses these things to oversee his underlings, this is called having awe-inspiring dignity and deportment (*wēi yí* 威儀).

文王伐崇，再駕而降為臣，蠻夷帥服，可謂畏之。 [...]

文王之行，至今為法，可謂象之。有威儀也。

故君子在位可畏，[...] 動作有文，言語有章，以臨其下，謂之有威儀也。⁹⁷

⁹⁶ The expressions *Mán* 蠻 and *Yí* 夷 are ethnonyms referring to non-Zhōu peoples.

⁹⁷ Zuǒ, Xiāng 31.13, Yáng 楊 (1990:1193-5).

In Běigōng Wénzǐ’s description of the ‘awe-inspiring dignity and deportment’ (*wēiyí*) of the ruler, the words *wèi* ‘awe, fear’ and *wēi* ‘awe-inspiring dignity’ are connected to *wén* in two respects.⁹⁸ First, King Wén’s (文) actions are held up as a model (*fǎ* 法) for awe-inspiring behavior (e.g., subjugating the restive Mán-Yí groups).⁹⁹ As witnessed by *Lúnyǔ* 9.5, discussed above, King Wén comes to be associated with metacultural *wén* during the Zhànguó period. Běigōng Wénzǐ thus mentions King Wén to illustrate that his actions that made people ‘fear’ (*wèi*) him are examples of him being *wén* ‘awe-inspiring,’ both in a moral sense and from the point of view of his physical appearance and actions.¹⁰⁰

Second, Běigōng Wénzǐ’s summary of the behavior and attributes of the *jūnzǐ* starts by saying that “the *jūnzǐ*, when in office, is held in awe (*wèi*).” Toward the end of the list of attributes of the *jūnzǐ*, Běigōng Wénzǐ includes a description of his “movements and stirrings” as having *wén* (*dòng zuò yǒu wén* 動作有文). Běigōng Wénzǐ concludes by stating that these attributes are “that by which he oversees his underlings” and thus amount to what “is called having awe-inspiring dignity (*wēi*) and deportment.” This is the most explicit connection between being *wén* and being ‘awe-inspiringly dignified’ (*wēi*) in the entire pre-Qín corpus.

In addition to these two older meanings, ‘beautiful’ and awe-inspiring,’ a number of passages from the *Zuǒzhuàn* show that *wén* refers to both external appearance and moral

⁹⁸ As shown by Baxter and Sagart (forth.), the Old Chinese words ‘awe-inspiring dignity; (natural) authority’ (*wēi* 威) and ‘to fear’ (*wèi* 畏) have related meanings and derive from the same root. Baxter and Sagart (forth.) reconstruct the Old Chinese word which is written with the graph <威> in received versions of pre-Qín texts as *ʔuj (> *wēi*) and the word written with <畏> as *ʔuj-s (> *wèi*). Both words are derived from the root *ʔuj. The -s suffix here indicates a transitive verbal meaning. The word *ʔuj-s (> *wèi*) thus probably meant ‘to fear; to frighten; threaten.’ In contrast, the word *ʔuj (> *wēi*) was used as a noun ‘fright; fear’ or adjective ‘frightening; awe-inspiring.’ Interestingly, the graph <威> is not found in excavated documents that use the graph <畏> to write both the word *ʔuj and the word *ʔuj-s, see Gǔwénzǐ gǔlín biānzhuǎn wěiyuánhuì (1999:9.784).

⁹⁹ In the interest of saving space, a few more examples of King Wén’s exemplary behavior described by Běigōng Wénzǐ have been omitted.

¹⁰⁰ Besides *Lúnyǔ* 9.5, King Wén is also explicitly linked to the ‘virtue of being *wén*’ in the “Jìfǎ 祭法” chapter of the *Lǐjì* 禮記: “King Wén governed through *wén*” 文王以文治 (SSJZS 1980:1590). For a useful discussion of the relationship between King Wén and *wén* 文 (esp. in the compound *wéncí* 文辭), see also Schaberg (2001:81ff).

attributes. In the passage from Huán 2.2 quoted below, Zāng Āibó, a Lǚ official, remonstrates with Duke Huán (r. 711-694) for transgressing ritual propriety by looting the ritual vessels of the state of Gào and placing them in the Grand Temple of the state of Lǚ. Zāng Āibó uses the opportunity to lecture Duke Huán on the proper behavior and appearance of a ruler and the importance of ‘displaying his charismatic power’ (*zhāo dé* 昭德). In his description of the ideal ruler, Zāng Āibó links the ruler’s ability to inspire apprehension and fear (*jiè jù* 戒懼) to the ‘awe-inspiring beauty’ (*wén*) displayed by his emblems (*wén*) and to his virtues as recorded in ‘decorated’ (*wén*) objects:

He who rules people displays his charismatic power (*dé*) and obstructs transgressions so that he may thereby shine on the hundred officers from above. [...] Hence, he displays his great charismatic power (*dé*) in order to show it to his descendants. [...] As for the flames, dragons, and the *fǔ* and *fú* designs on embroideries, these display his *wén*. [...] As for his charismatic power (*dé*) and his property of being frugal and measured [...]; **decorated** (*wén*) objects are used to record them. [These properties] are manifested in sound and brightly displayed so that they shine on the hundred officers from above. Consequently, the hundred officers are struck with apprehension and fear, and do not dare to change the rules and statutes. 君人者，將昭德塞違，以臨照百官 [...] 故昭令德以示子孫。[...] 火、龍、黼、黻，昭其文也。[...] 夫德，儉而有度 [...] 文物以紀之，聲明以發之，以臨照百官。百官於是乎戒懼而不敢易紀律。¹⁰¹

The first occurrence of *wén* in this passage refers to the ‘awe-inspiring beauty’ of the ruler expressed by the embroidered emblems of status and rank, i.e., the flame and dragon patterns (*huǒ lóng* 火龍) and the *fǔfú* 黼黻 designs found on his garments, flags and banners.¹⁰² This occurrence of *wén* is thus comparable to the occurrence of the term to refer to ‘woven patterns and bird insignia (*zhī wén niǎo zhāng*)’ in Máo 177 discussed in section 1. Note also the similarities between Zāng Āibó’s description of the ideal ruler and the description found in Máo

¹⁰¹ Zuǒ, Huán 2.2, Yáng 楊 (1990:86-9).

¹⁰² Powers (1995:223) translates the expression *fǔ fú* 黼黻 as “noble designs.” He also suggests that “by mid-Warring States times, the term often served simply as metonymy for any sumptuous counterchange pattern, i.e., a pattern in which figure and ground are reversible.” For detailed discussion of the *fǔ fú* 黼黻 design, see also Hayashi Minao (1969:74-80).

55 discussed in section 1. Both passages emphasize the dashing external appearance of the ruler, detailing his garments and the various accoutrements on himself, his chariots, and horses. Thus, this *Zuǒzhuàn* passage reflects a society in which physical appearance was still closely connected to status and authority.

Unlike the passage from Máo 55, Zāng Āibó interprets some of the physical objects and qualities as **signs** of moral virtues (*dé* 德).¹⁰³ In contrast, in Máo 55 the ‘lord’ (*jūnzǐ*) simply is ‘beautiful’ and ‘awe-inspiring.’ The end of the passage from Huán 2.2 quoted above indicates a link between inner power (*dé*) and virtues of frugality (*jiǎn*) and measure (*dù*) by stating that they are externally manifested/expressed in his ‘patterned accoutrements’ (*wén wù* 文物). In the *Zuǒzhuàn*, the ruler’s external appearance thus serves the double purpose of being both visually ‘awe-inspiring’ and indicating his moral virtues (*dé*) of frugality (*jiǎn* 儉) and appropriate sense of measure (*dù* 度).¹⁰⁴

Though *wén* begins to refer to moral virtues, it still retains connotations of its basic meaning of ‘(externally visible) decorative pattern.’ In Huán 2.2 discussed above, *wén* refers to the fire and dragon emblems (*wén*) on garments, and ‘decorated accoutrements’ (*wén wù*). In Xiāng 31.13, also discussed above, *wén* describes the “movements and stirrings” (*dòng zuò*) of the *jūnzǐ* as well as his property of having awe-inspiring dignity and deportment’ (*wēi yí* 威儀). Xī 24.1 adds to this picture by describing words as the ‘external decoration’ of a person:

¹⁰³ This passage is thus one of the first in the pre-Qín corpus in which *dé* 德 refers more to ‘moral virtues’ than to the earlier meaning ‘charismatic power.’

¹⁰⁴ Compare with the occurrence of *wéndé* in Máo 262, discussed in section 1 above, which refers to the ‘awe-inspiring charismatic power of the ruler.’ The word *dé* 德 became reanalyzed at the same time as the words *jūnzǐ*, and *wén*. In the pre-Zhànguó period, *dé* referred to a kind of ‘charismatic power’ which may, perhaps, best be understood as kind of accumulated moral capital which could be inherited from one’s ancestors. It started to be analyzed in more moral terms as ‘moral virtue’ at around the middle of the first millennium BCE. In this passage I translate it as ‘power’ since it predominantly refers to the charismatic power of the ruler. This reading of *dé* is supported by the end of the passage, which states that “the hundred officers” are so impressed with the *wén* of the ruler that they “are struck with apprehension and fear (*jiè jù* 戒懼), and do not dare to depart from the rules and statues.”

“Utterances are the decoration (*wén*) of a person.¹⁰⁵ When a person is about to go into reclusion, what is the use of decorating (*wén*) oneself? That would be seeking ostentatious display” 言，身之文也。身將隱，焉用文之？是求顯也。¹⁰⁶ Uttered by Jiè zhī Tuī 介之推 to explain why he will not plead his case with Duke Wén of Jin, who has neglected to reward him for his loyal service during the long years of the duke’s exile, this statement clearly shows that in the *Zuǒzhuàn*, *wén* was the externally observable expression “in clothing, accoutrements, gestures, and words” (Schaberg 2001a:64) of a person’s inner worth and authority/dignity. That is, the awe-inspiring beauty of a *wén* person referred not only to *static* properties (e.g., the embroideries on his robes, etc.) but also to *dynamic* properties (e.g., his speech, his actions, his demeanor, etc.).

In sum, the use of *wén* to describe people in the *Zuǒzhuàn* retains the earlier pre-Zhànguó meanings of (i) physically ‘beautiful’ and (ii) ‘awe-inspiring’ display of external marks of social status and authority. To these older meanings, the *Zuǒzhuàn* also begins to add moral interpretations of *wén* as the externally manifested signs of inner virtues.

2.2.2 From the ‘moral refinement’ of the noble man to the ‘moral refinement’ of the Zhōu dynasty: the emergence of metacultural *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ*

The *Lúnyǔ* discusses the moral interpretation of *wén* more explicitly than the *Zuǒzhuàn*. It is in the *Lúnyǔ* that we first see *wén*—understood as ‘moral refinement’—assumed to be an **acquired** attribute of the ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ*). In it we also find the first metacultural uses of *wén* as a noun referring to the ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior.’ The passages from the *Lúnyǔ* used

¹⁰⁵ The word *shēn* 身 literally means ‘body.’ It is also frequently used as a reflexive pronoun or as a noun referring to the ‘self.’

¹⁰⁶ *Zuǒ*, Xi 24.1 Yáng 楊 (1990:418-9).

in this chapter represent the intellectual milieu of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE.¹⁰⁷ Since the term *jūnzǐ* now also refers to individuals who do not belong to the nobility (i.e., ‘noble men’ in the moral sense of the term), the property of being *wén* is no longer simply the prerogative of the hereditary nobility but can also be acquired by non-nobles provided that they engage in the proper edification process. In the *Lúnyǔ*, *wén* is therefore no longer understood ‘awe-inspiringly beauty’ (in the sense of possessing the externally observable markers of social status) as in the pre-Zhànguó period, but is conceptualized mainly in moral terms as the externally observable signs of moral perfection.

Let us begin by considering the moral interpretation given to *wén* in posthumous titles in the *Lúnyǔ*. As discussed in section 1, in the pre-Zhànguó period, *wén* in posthumous titles meant ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful.’ In contrast, in *Lúnyǔ* 5.15, Kǒngzǐ and his followers explicitly discuss the motivation for the use of *wén* in posthumous titles in moral terms.¹⁰⁸

Zǐgòng 子貢 asked, “What is the reason Kǒng Wénzǐ 孔文子 is [posthumously] called *Wén*?” The Master replied, “He was diligent and fond of learning. And he did not consider it shameful to

¹⁰⁷ The material in the *Lúnyǔ* was composed over the span of at least two centuries from the beginning of the Zhànguó period to the 3rd century BCE. It can be divided roughly by century as follows: (i) *LY* 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 composed in the 5th century BCE; (ii) *LY* 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 composed in the 4th century, and (iii) *LY* 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 composed in the 3rd century BCE. The passages from the *Lúnyǔ* used in this chapter are all from group (i) or (ii) and can thus be seen as representing the intellectual milieu of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. See Brooks and Brooks (1997), Cheng (1993b), Makeham (1996) and Qū Wànlǐ (1983:382-389).

¹⁰⁸ As mentioned above, the oldest extant work on the system of posthumous names (*Shì fǎ* 謚法) is the “*Shì fǎ jiě* 謚法解” chapter in the *Yì Zhōu shū* 逸周書, which describes the circumstances under which a person may be given the posthumous title *wén* 文. As can be seen from the following excerpt, it discusses the motivation for using *wén* in posthumous titles mostly in moral terms:

Someone who has been like warp and weft in relation to Heaven and Earth may be called *wén*; someone whose Way and virtue is broad and thick may be called *wén*; someone who has studied assiduously and been fond of asking questions may be called *wén*; someone who has been kind and gracious in caring for the people may be called *wén*; someone who has had sympathy with the people and graciously performed the rites may be called *wén*; someone who has bestowed titles of rank on the people may be called *wén*. 經緯天地曰文，道德博厚曰文，學勤好問曰文，慈惠愛民曰文，愍民惠禮曰文，錫民爵位曰文。(Huáng 黃, et al. 2007:635-7)

The *Yì Zhōu shū* is traditionally attributed to the Duke of Zhōu. However, as many scholars have observed, the text is probably from the Zhànguó period or early Hàn times, see Shaughnessy (1993). The fact that it defines the use of *wén* in posthumous titles in moral terms also is also consistent with the hypothesis that it must be from after 500 BCE.

ask those below him. This is the reason why he is [posthumously] called *Wén*.” 子貢問曰：孔文子何以謂之文也？子曰：敏而好學，不恥下問，是以謂之文也。¹⁰⁹

After his death around 484 BCE, Kǒng Yǔ 孔圉, a minister at the Wei court, was given the posthumous title Kǒng Wénzǐ 孔文子. Zǐgòng's question about why Kǒng Yǔ was honored posthumously with the title *Wén* is probably motivated by his knowledge of Kǒng Yǔ's rather mixed record during his lifetime.¹¹⁰ In his answer Kǒngzǐ justifies Kǒng Yǔ's title by citing his positive traits, such as being hardworking, humble and studious. Thus, although Kǒng Yǔ may have been far from perfect, at least someone deemed him worthy of being called 'morally refined' (*wén*). In sum, *Lúnyǔ* 5.15 illustrates a new use of *wén* as meaning 'morally refined' that we do not see before the Zhànguó period.¹¹¹

Now let us turn to passages that illustrate that *wén* in the moral sense was beginning to be considered an **acquired** property. *Lúnyǔ* 1.15 contains a metaphorical interpretation of the line “as if cut, as if polished; as if carved, as if ground” (如切如磋，如琢如磨) from Máo 55 in the *Shī*, discussed in section 1 above, which implies that the 'moral refinement' of a noble man is acquired through a slow process of moral edification.

Zǐgòng asked, 'Being poor but not fawning, wealthy but not arrogant. What do you think of this?' The Master said, 'That is acceptable, but it is not as good as being poor but still finding joy in the Way, or being wealthy but still being fond of the rites.' Zǐgòng said, 'A poem says, **as if cut, as if polished; as if carved, as if ground**. Is what you just said not an example of what is expressed in

¹⁰⁹ *Lúnyǔ* 5.15, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:325).

¹¹⁰ Being part of the eulogizing lore emerging after the death of a high-status individual, the vast majority (but not all) of posthumous titles are based on positive terms such as *wén* 'awe-inspiring', *líng* 靈 'potent', and *huì* 惠 'wise.' In many cases such highly positive posthumous titles were less reflective of the carrier's true mettle than of the power and influence that his close circle of family and supporters exerted after his death. Consequently, even individuals whose qualities and actions during their lifetimes were far from morally perfect were still often referred to in highly laudatory terms after their deaths.

¹¹¹ See also *Lúnyǔ* 14.18, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:996-7), for a similar discussion of the reasons for using *wén* in posthumous titles.

this line?’ 子貢問曰：貧而無諂，富而無驕，何如？子曰：可也。未若貧而樂道、富而好禮者也。子貢曰：《詩》云：『如切如磋，如琢如磨』，其斯之謂與？¹¹²

The main purpose of *Lúnyǔ* 1.15 is to describe the ‘moral refinement’ of the ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ*) as consisting of acquired moral traits such as being “observant of the rites” and “delighting in the Way” rather than “obsequious” and “arrogant.” The fact that *Lúnyǔ* 1.15 quotes from Máo 55 provides us with an opportunity to compare the semantic shift of *wén*, from ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ in pre-Zhànguó times, as illustrated by Máo 55 discussed in section 1, to ‘morally refined’ in the Zhànguó period, as illustrated in *Lúnyǔ* 1.15. As argued in Slingerland (2003b:53), the passage from Máo 55 “as if cut, as if polished; as if carved, as if ground” quoted in *Lúnyǔ* 1.15 refers metaphorically to the process of edification. Just as the decorative patterns on a jade vessel are acquired externally, so too is the ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*) of the ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ*) acquired through imitation of an external tradition of ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ (i.e., the *sī wén* referred to in *Lúnyǔ* 9.5).

Further support for analysis of *wén* as an acquired attribute can be found in *Lúnyǔ* 14.12, where *wén* is used as a transitive verb meaning ‘to pattern’ or ‘to decorate’: “If someone who possesses Zāng Wǔzhòng’s wisdom, Gōngchuò’s freedom from desire, and Zhuāngzǐ of Biàn’s courage [...] is **wén’ed** through ritual and music, then he can be considered a perfected person” (若臧武仲之知，公綽之不欲，卞莊子之勇[...] 文之以禮樂，亦可以為成人矣).¹¹³ Here Kǒngzǐ describes the ‘perfected man’ (*chéng rén* 成人). In addition to possessing certain inner qualities (i.e., wisdom, freedom from desires, courage, etc.) as raw material, he also needs to undergo further refinement (*wén*) through the rites and music (*lǐ yuè* 禮樂). Only then will he

¹¹² *Lúnyǔ* 1.15, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:54-6), tr. partially inspired by Slingerland (2003a:6-7).

¹¹³ *Lúnyǔ* 14.12, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:969).

achieve the balance of ‘moral refinement’ *wén* and ‘native substance’ *zhì* 質 that is required of the ‘noble man’ in *Lúnyǔ* 6.18.¹¹⁴

By opening up the possibility that ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*) can be acquired, *Lúnyǔ* 1.15 and 14.12 also imply that it is possible for persons of non-noble background to become ‘morally refined’ (*wén*) through the proper edification process. Thus, for example, the passage from *Lúnyǔ* 14.12 quoted above does not assume that the ‘perfected person’ (*chéng rén* 成人) must be of noble birth. Furthermore, since *wén* is explicitly mentioned as part of the curriculum taught by Kǒngzǐ,¹¹⁵ and since several of his students, such as Yán Huí,¹¹⁶ were of non-noble origin, it is clear that the edification process through which one acquires *wén* was not confined to people of noble birth.¹¹⁷

The reinterpretation of adjectival uses of *wén* from ‘awe-inspiring display of external marks of social status and authority’ to ‘displaying the external appearance and charisma of moral perfection’ was one of the first steps in the development of metacultural uses of *wén* as a noun referring to ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ (as in *Lúnyǔ* 9.5). After this semantic shift had taken place, the new meaning of *wén* as ‘displaying the external appearance of

¹¹⁴ See *Lúnyǔ* 6.18, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:400): “The Master said, ‘When native substance dominates *wén*, then one is crude. When *wén* dominates native substance, one is pedantic. Only when *wén* and native substance are balanced, then you are a noble man’” 質勝文則野，文勝質則史，文質彬彬，然後君子。(tr. partially adapted from Slingerland (2003a:59)). For further discussion of the contrast between *wén* 文 and *zhì* 質 in the *Lúnyǔ*, see also Chong (1998).

¹¹⁵ See *Lúnyǔ* 7.25, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:486): “The Master used four things to teach: moral refinement (*wén* 文), behavior, loyalty, and trust” 子以四教：文、行、忠、信。

¹¹⁶ See *Lúnyǔ* 9.11, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:593-5): “Yán Huí 顏回, sighing, said, ‘[...] The Master [...] has broadened me with *wén* and restrained me with the rites’” (lǐ 禮). 顏淵喟然歎曰：[...]夫子 [...] 博我以文，約我以禮。

¹¹⁷ In contrast, in the *Shī*, as well as in the rest of the pre-Zhànguó corpus, the term *jūnzǐ* consistently refers to ‘rulers/lords’ or ‘noblemen.’ Indeed, I have found no clear examples of the term *jūnzǐ* used exclusively in the later, Zhànguó sense of ‘morally refined gentleman (regardless of birth)’ in the entire pre-Zhànguó corpus. That is, there are no instances in pre-Zhànguó texts of the term *jūnzǐ* being used to refer to men of non-noble birth.

moral perfection’ could now be applied to entire dynasties (*dài* 代).¹¹⁸ Thus, while adjectival *wén* refers to the ‘moral refinement’ of a person in *Lúnyǔ* 5.15, in *Lúnyǔ* 3.14 Kǒngzǐ uses it to describe the Zhōu dynasty:

The Master said, “As for the Zhōu, when viewed on the background of the two [preceding] dynasties [i.e., the Xià and the Shāng], how splendid! How morally refined (*wén*)¹¹⁹ indeed! I follow the [the ways of the] Zhōu.” 子曰：周監於二代，郁郁乎文哉！吾從周。¹²⁰

In this passage Kǒngzǐ sets apart the Zhōu as being the greatest and most morally perfected, i.e., the most *wén*, of the three dynasties. *Lúnyǔ* 9.5 contains another example of *wén* referring to the ‘refinement of the tradition’ passed down from the revered founding kings of the Zhōu. Since *Lúnyǔ* 3.14 and 9.5 are statements that explicitly refer to and comment on the tradition of the Zhōu, these occurrences of the term *wén* constitute the first cases in the extant texts of what I refer to as metacultural *wén*.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ In *Zuǒ*, Xiāng 8.3 ‘awe-inspiring charismatic power’ (*wéndé* 文德) is described as something which a state (*guó* 國) can either have or lack: “There is no greater disaster than if a small state is without *wéndé* but still [wants to] have military achievements” 小國無文德而有武功，禍莫大焉 (*Zuǒ*, Xiāng 8.3, Yáng 楊 (1990:956)). Although this indirectly implies that states (*guó*) can be *wén*, it is not an instance of adjectival *wén* directly describing a state.

¹¹⁹ Although I translate *wén* as an adjective here, it is also possible to translate it as a noun, i.e., “How splendid [its] *wén* indeed!”

¹²⁰ *Lúnyǔ* 3.14, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:182).

¹²¹ One passage in *Zuǒzhuàn*, Xī 24.4 contains the expression *wén zhī jiào* 文之教, see Yáng 楊 (1990:447). Since the preceding context describes how Duke Wen of Jin ‘taught his people’ (*jiāo qí mǐn* 教其民), it is clear that this passage refers to ‘Duke Wen’s teaching [of people].’ In other words, this occurrence of *wén* probably does not refer to the metacultural sense of *wén*, but rather to the posthumous title of the Duke of Jin. This reading is supported by the fact that in the vast majority of occurrences of the phrase X之教, X refers to the teacher rather than to that which is being taught. For discussion of this passage, see also Schaberg (2001:220).

2.2.3 Metacultural *wén* in the *Xúnzǐ*: ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior

There is general agreement that most of the material of which the *Xúnzǐ* is composed reflects 3rd century Zhànguó thought.¹²² Since the *Xúnzǐ* also contains the most explicitly developed theory of *wén*, it serves as the perfect work for illustrating the fourth and last step in the development of metacultural uses of this term in the pre-Qín period. In many ways, the *Xúnzǐ* represents late-Zhànguó-period developments of earlier uses of *wén* found in the *Lúnyǔ*. First, the *Xúnzǐ* defines the *wén* of the ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ*) in more explicitly moral terms than the *Lúnyǔ*.

The **noble man** (*jūnzǐ*) [...] debates, but does not compete. [...] He is firm and unyielding, but not violent. [...] He is respectful, reverent, meticulous and careful, but still generous. Indeed, this is what is called [being] utmost *wén*. 君子 [...] 辯而不爭 [...] 堅彊而不暴 [...] 恭敬謹慎而容。夫是之謂至文。¹²³

This passage from the *Xúnzǐ* leaves no doubt that the *wén* of the ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ*) consists of having a set of moral qualities that are observable in his behavior and demeanor. In contrast to the *Shī* and the *Zuǒzhuàn*, having a ‘beautiful’ (*měi*) or ‘awe-inspiring’ (*wēi*) external appearance is no longer necessary for being a ‘morally refined’ (*wén*) noble man (*jūnzǐ*).¹²⁴

¹²² Needless to say, this does not preclude later interpolations, or even the possibility of entire chapters dating from the Qin or early Han periods; see Knoblock (1988-1994:105-128) and Loewe (1993).

¹²³ *Xúnzǐ* 3.4, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:40-41), tr. adapted from Knoblock (1988-1994). The numbering of sections in the *Xúnzǐ* used here is also adopted from Knoblock (1988-1994).

¹²⁴ In spite of the fact that the *Xúnzǐ* most often uses *wén* to refer to the ‘moral refinement’ of the noble man (*jūnzǐ*), as illustrated in the passage discussed in the previous section, it also still occasionally uses the term in the older sense to refer to the important social function of the ‘beautiful’ and ‘awe-inspiring’ appearance of the ruler:

The former kings and sages [...] knew that if those who were rulers of men and superiors did not make [themselves] beautiful (*měi* 美) and did not decorate (*shì* 飾) [themselves], then they would not be able to unify the people; [...] that if they were not awe-inspiring (*wēi* 威) and strong, then they would not be able to prevent aggression and conquer ferocious enemies. Hence, [...] [one] must chisel and polish [stones], [and one] must carve and inlay [metals]; and emblems (*wén*) and insignia (*zhāng*) must have *fū fū* designs in order to fill the eyes [of their subjects]. 先王聖人 [...] 知夫為人主上者，不美不飾之不足以一民也[...] 不威不強之不足以禁暴勝悍也。故[...]必將銅琢刻鏤，黼黻文章，以塞其目。(Xúnzǐ 10.9, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:185) tr. adapted from Knoblock (1988-1994))

The description of the ruler as ‘awe-inspiring’ (*wēi* 威) and ‘beautiful’ (*měi* 美) in this passage seems very close to the use of *wén* in the *Zuǒzhuàn* passage from Xiāng 31.10 discussed above. Only by ‘decorating’ (*shì* 飾) and making themselves ‘beautiful’ (*měi* 美) can the ruler unify all under Heaven (*tiān xià*). The ruler’s impressive emblems (*wén*) and insignia play a central role in this process by ‘filling the eyes [of his subjects].’ Not surprisingly, the authors of the *Xúnzǐ* tend to use this older meaning of *wén* when describing the ancient kings.

As in the *Lúnyǔ*, the *wén* of the noble man is an acquired trait that is accessible to anyone willing to undergo the necessary edification process. While the *Lúnyǔ* does not formulate its theory of moral education explicitly, the *Xúnzǐ* spells out the implications of using crafts metaphors to describe the process of acquiring *wén*.¹²⁵

Polite (*wén*) studies¹²⁶ is to a person what polishing and grinding are to jade. A poem says, **As if cut, as if polished; as if carved, as if ground.** This refers to studying and inquiring. As for Hé's jade disc and the Jīnglǐ stone, after jade specialists polished them, then they became the most precious under Heaven.¹²⁷ Zǐgòng¹²⁸ and Jì Lù—who were men of lowly backgrounds—donned **polite** (*wén*) studies and dressed in the rites and duty, then they became the most illustrious retainer-officials¹²⁹ under Heaven.

人之於文學也，猶玉之於琢磨也。《詩》曰：「如切如磋，如琢如磨。」謂學問也。
和之璧，井里之厥也，玉人琢之，為天子寶。
子贛、季路，故鄙人也，被文學，服禮義，為天下列士。¹³⁰

This crafts metaphor shows that the *Xúnzǐ* views edification as a slow process of fashioning the moral mettle of an individual through 'polite studies' or 'imitation of the ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior' (*wénxué* 文學)¹³¹, which are preserved in the tradition of government

¹²⁵ For a detailed study of the use of crafts metaphors in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, see Slingerland (2003b).

¹²⁶ Another possible translation the term is 'pattern (*wén*) imitation.' See also chapter 3 for further discussion of possible translations of the term 文學.

¹²⁷ Here I follow Wáng Niànsūn 王念孫 in emending <天子> to <天下>, see Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:508).

¹²⁸ The text writes the name Zǐgòng as <子贛> rather than <子貢>. According to William Baxter (p.c.), these are probably not different names, but different ways of writing the same name, which originally ended in *-m but was dissimilated to *-ŋ in some dialects (though probably not in the region of the 贛 Gàn river, which probably reflects local pronunciation in *-m). Both characters can be used for 'tribute': 贛 ~ *[k]ʰom-s (dial.) > *[k]ʰoŋ-s > kuwngH > kòŋ 'tribute; to present.' According to Baxter and Sagart (p.c.), 貢 is "also written 贛. [It is t]he name of Kǒngzǐ's disciple Zǐ Gòng, usually written 子貢, is written as 子[久/貝] in the Dìng xiàn Hàn jiǎn 定縣漢簡 (according to the transcription on CHANT)." The name also occurs in the Shanghai Museum texts. The use of 工 as phonetic is late. The change of *-om to *-oŋ is a dialect feature; and 贛 is pronounced both gàn < MC komH and gòŋ < MC kuwngH. See Chen Jian (1999:2007) 釋西周金文的“鞞(贛)”字, pp. 8-19 of his book (2007)."

¹²⁹ The term *shì* 士 is notoriously difficult to translate. For lack of a better word, I use 'retainer-officials' as a stopgap translation.

¹³⁰ *Xúnzǐ* 27.84, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:508), tr. adapted from Knoblock (1988-1994).

¹³¹ The exact meaning of the expression *wénxué* 文學 is controversial. Much confusion has been generated by projecting later meanings into the pre-Qín period. Although the term comes to mean something like 'literature' or 'literary studies' in later periods, I agree with Kern (2001) that such readings are anachronistic in pre-Qín texts. It is therefore unlikely that this is its meaning in *Xúnzǐ* 27.84. As discussed here, rather than referring narrowly to 'texts' (which is one of the meanings of *wén* in post-Qín usage), pre-Qín uses of *wén* in the expression *wénxué* refer more

institutions and social mores from the early Zhōu. Using Lakoff and Johnson’s (1999) theory of conceptual metaphor, this crafts metaphor can be analyzed as follows. The physical process of jade carving provides the structuring source domain for this conceptualization of moral edification. First, just as raw jade does not have the teleological potential to turn into beautifully carved objects on its own, human beings also do not have innate knowledge of normative values that will allow them to turn into sages on their own. Second, in the same way that raw rocks containing jade appear crude and unappealing at first glance, the potential worth of people of humble origins (such as Zīgòng and Jì Lù) also cannot easily be judged by appearances. Third, by cutting and carving, the jade carver can turn an unassuming rock into a treasured gem. Similarly, since people do not have the innate resources to transform themselves on their own, they need to learn about the ‘ideal patterns of normative values’ (*wén* 文) from an external tradition under the guidance of a teacher or mentor. Through this process, even lowly people (*bǐ rén* 鄙人) are able to become skilled and morally refined retainer-officials known everywhere under Heaven. In sum, although not spelled out in the original passage, the implications furnished by the source domain (i.e., jade carving) allow us to infer that the authors assumed the carved patterns on the jade object to correspond to the ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*) of the ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ*).¹³²

By using the exact same phrase ‘as if cut, as if polished; as if carved, as if ground’ from *Shī* 55 as the one also quoted by Zīgòng in *Lúnyǔ* 1.15 discussed above, the *Xúnzǐ* explicitly anchors its own theory of moral education in the tradition from the *Lúnyǔ*. In sum, the

broadly to the social and moral ‘patterns’ (be they in sacrifice, rites, music, etc.) of which the body of classical texts (the *Shū*, and the *Shī*) are simply a small part.

As discussed in chapter 3, another translation of *wénxué* 文學 is ‘polite studies’ (in the 19th-century meaning of the term). That is, it is also possible that the *wén* in the phrase *wénxué* 文學 functions as an adjective (‘polished’, ‘patterned’) modifying a nominal use of the work *xué* 學 ‘study.’

For yet another analysis of *wénxué* 文學, see Chow (1979).

¹³² See also Slingerland (2003b:233) for a discussion of the implications of this crafts metaphor.

acquisition of ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*) through a long edification process—based on the imitation of the ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ of the early Zhōu—was seen as a necessary prerequisite for office-holding in both the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*.

Now let us turn to nominal uses of *wén* referring to metacultural concepts. As in *Lúnyǔ* 9.5, where Kǒngzǐ refers to the tradition of the early Zhōu as ‘this *wén*’ (*sī wén* 斯文), the *Xúnzǐ* also contains nominal uses of *wén* that refer to the metacultural concept of ‘ideal patterns in transmitted practices.’ Thus *Xúnzǐ* 19.11 explicitly describes how the former kings (*xiān wáng* 先王) established (*lì* 立) the ‘ideal prescriptive patterns’ (*wén* 文) of sacrificial rites in order to help the mourners control and channel their emotions in socially appropriate ways.

The former kings consequently established the **ideal patterns** (*wén*) for these situations [...]. Therefore I say: As for sacrifice [...], it is the [manifestation] of utmost loyalty, trust, caring and respect; [it is] the perfection of the rites and restraint and of **refined** (*wén*) appearance. 故先王案為之立文 [...]. 故曰：祭者 [...] 忠信愛敬之至矣，禮節文貌之盛矣。¹³³

Interestingly, this passage uses the term *wén* both to refer to the metacultural concept of the ideal prescriptive ‘patterns’ for the conventional practices of mourning rites established (*lì* 立) by the former kings, and to describe the ‘morally refined’ appearance (*maò* 貌) of the person following these practices appropriately. In other words, *wén* is used to refer both to the physically observable dignified appearance of an individual, as well as to the less directly observable ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior.

In another passage, the *Xúnzǐ* describes how the former kings made (*wéi* 為) the ‘ideal patterns’ for music. “Sounds and music penetrate deep into people, and their transformation of people is swift. Therefore the former kings diligently made ‘ideal patterns’ (*wén*) for [sounds and

¹³³ *Xúnzǐ* 19.11, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:375), tr. adapted from Knoblock (1988-1994).

music]” (夫聲樂之入人也深，其化人也速，故先王謹為之文).¹³⁴ The implication, spelled out in the continuation of this passage, is that the ideal musical patterns (*wén*) of the former kings ensured centered and balanced music that made the people behave correctly and thereby prevented disorder (*luàn* 亂). Thus, without the ideal patterns (*wén*) made by the sages, music as a tool for governing the people would be much less efficacious.

Based on the view of the former kings as responsible for establishing the ‘correct patterns’ of sacrificial practice and music, the *Xúnzǐ* develops a theory of kingship that includes ‘perfecting’ (*chéng* 成) the ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ (*wén* 文) in order to display it to all under Heaven (*shì zhī tiān xià* 示之天下):

The [true] ruler [...] puts forth¹³⁵ the worthy and is thereby able to save the unworthy. He puts forth the strong and is thereby able to be broadminded toward the weak. If he engages in warfare then he will necessarily endanger [his enemies] but he still considers it shameful to fight with anyone. Indeed, he perfects *wén* in order to display it to all under Heaven so that violent states will transform themselves peacefully. 王者[...] 致賢而能以救不肖，致彊而能以寬弱，戰必能殆之而羞與之鬥，委然成文，以示之天下，而暴國安自化矣。¹³⁶

This passage describes how the ruler can pacify potential enemies by perfecting *wén*, understood here either as his own ‘moral refinement’ or as the ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior.’ That *wén* still refers to externally observable patterns is indicated by the fact that it must be displayed (*shì* 示). The transformative power of the display of ‘patterned moral perfection’ *wén* is also emphasized in *Xúnzǐ* 14.6, which states that “if those above are *wén*, then those below will

¹³⁴ *Xúnzǐ* 20.2, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:380).

¹³⁵ I am translating *zhì* 致 as a verb meaning ‘to put forth.’ It is also possible to read *zhì* 致 as a graphic variant for *zhì* 至 ‘utmost, to the highest degree.’

¹³⁶ *Xúnzǐ* 7.1, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:108), tr. adapted from Knoblock (1988-1994).

be peaceful” (*shàng wén xià ān* 上文下安).¹³⁷ These passages thus indicate that metacultural *wén* was mainly conceived of as a property of the ruler and ruling elite (*shàng* 上), rather than a something that the masses should strive for. In this respect it differs significantly from the Modern English concept of ‘culture.’

In the *Xúnzǐ*, the social function of *wén* as a form of transformative communication between high and low is intimately linked to the rites (*lǐ* 禮). Thus according to the *Xúnzǐ*, the “rites [...] use [distinctions between] noble and base to create patterns (*wén*) [of social distinction]” 禮者[...]以貴賤為文 (*Xúnzǐ* 19.3).¹³⁸ In a different passage, the *Xúnzǐ* elaborates on this theme by describing how the former kings made ‘emblems and insignia’ (*wénzhāng*) as well as elaborately decorated status objects, such as carved jades, metal inlay and embroidered garments, only “to distinguish the noble from the base and nothing more, and not to strive for ostentatious display” 以辨貴賤而已，不求其觀 (*Xúnzǐ* 10.1). In *Xúnzǐ* 10.1, the compound ‘emblems (*wén*) and insignia’ (*wénzhāng*) are thus physical manifestations of the ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ (*wén*) instituted by the former kings to create social order by establishing a social hierarchy.^{139 140}

¹³⁷ *Xúnzǐ* 14.6, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:263). Compare this difference—between ‘those above’ (*shàng*) who have *wén* and ‘those below’ (*xià*) who are in ‘awe’ (*wèi*) over and are governed by the dignified (*wēi*) *wén* of their superiors—with the passage from *Zuǒzhuàn* Xiāng 31.13 discussed above.

¹³⁸ *Xúnzǐ* 19.3, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:357). The same description of the relationship between *wén* 文 and *lǐ* 禮 can also be found in *Xúnzǐ* 27.45, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:497).

¹³⁹ The *Zuǒzhuàn* also contains a passage that defines the purpose of displaying ‘emblems and insignia’ (*wénzhāng*) is to clarify the distinction between honored and base: “Display emblems and insignia to clarify the distinction between noble and base” 昭文章，明貴賤 (*Zuǒ*, Yīn 5.1). Dù Yù’s commentary to this passage specifies that *wénzhāng* refers to chariots, clothes, banners and flags. As we have seen in many of the passages discussed here, marks of status and rank were often manifested as decorations on items such as these.

¹⁴⁰ The last sentence “[The former kings] did not [thereby] strive for ostentatious display” (不求其觀) was most likely added to preempt criticism from followers of the ideas expressed in the *Hánfēizǐ* and the *Mòzǐ*, which are full of critical remarks about what they considered to be the wasteful practices of Rǔ rites (*lǐ*) and *wén*. The most explicit criticism of the Rǔ concept of *wén* is found in *Hánfēizǐ* 49: “The *rú* 儒 throws the government models (*fǎ*) into disarray through *wén*” 儒以文亂法 (*Hánfēizǐ* 49, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:449)). This passage also indicates

Several passages in the *Xúnzǐ* thus reveal that *wén* and rites (*lǐ* 禮) stand in close relationship to each other. In a concrete sense, *wén* ‘emblems’ and *wénzhāng* ‘insignia’ as signs of social status are the overt manifestations of the hierarchical relations encoded in the rites. On a more abstract level, as illustrated by the *Xúnzǐ* passages discussed above, *wén* can also be used to refer to the ideal prescriptive patterns (*wén*) that the former kings established to regulate practices such as music and mourning sacrifices. The Way of the ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ zhī dào* 君子之道) can therefore be equated with striving to achieve the ‘refined patterning/moral perfection’ of rites and duty (*lǐ yì zhī wén* 禮義之文).¹⁴¹ Another passage clearly describes rites (*lǐ* 禮) as the ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*) that must be applied to native human nature in order to make people elegant (*yǎ* 雅) noble men (*jūnzǐ*) and to save them from becoming like birds and beasts (*qín shòu* 禽獸).

Is this a thing that is ‘**patterned/decorated**’ (*wén*), but not [overly] variegated? [...] Is this a thing that the noble man (*jūnzǐ* 君子) respects, but the petty person does not? Is this a thing, which if inborn nature does not acquire it, then one becomes like the birds and the beasts; and if inborn nature does acquire it, then one will be very elegant (*yǎ* 雅)? Is this a thing that if an ordinary man makes it flourish, then he will become a sage? [...] I beg to categorize this under the term “rites” (*lǐ* 禮). 此夫文而不采者與? 君子所敬而小人所不者與? 性不得則若禽獸, 性得之則甚雅似者與? 匹夫隆之則為聖人 [...] 者與? 請歸之禮。¹⁴²

Beyond establishing that the rites are the ideal ‘patterned decoration’ of human nature, this passage also clearly shows that *wén* is the ‘moral refinement’ that, if acquired through

that the *Hánfēizǐ* assumes *wén* to be associated with the Rú. See chapter 3 for more discussion of the diversity of attitudes towards the metacultural concept of *wén* in the pre-Qín period.

¹⁴¹ *Xúnzǐ* 19.4, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:359).

¹⁴² *Xúnzǐ* 26.1, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:472-3), tr. adapted from Knoblock (1988-1994).

implementation of the rites, can make an ‘ordinary man’ (*pǐfū* 匹夫) into a ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ*), or even a sage (聖人 *shèng rén*).¹⁴³

In sum, the passages from the *Xúnzǐ* analyzed above illustrate four basic meanings that the term *wén* had in the late Zhànguó period¹⁴⁴: (i) the already somewhat archaic meaning of ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ (*wén*) referring to the imposing appearance of the ruler, (ii) the ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*) of a ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ*) who is trained in (what is construed to be) the ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ (*wén*) of the early Zhōu period, (iii) the ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*) of an entire society embodying the social mores and traditions of the early Zhōu period, and (iv) metacultural concepts such as the ‘ideal patterns of the conventionalized practices’ established by the former kings (*xiān wáng*).

Finally, let us return to the question of translation. Although *wén* does develop metacultural uses in Zhànguó texts, translating it as ‘culture’ and ‘cultured’ is still problematic. First, the Old Chinese word *wén* and Modern English *culture* have different etymological origins that continue to inform their uses and meanings. As shown above, metacultural uses of Old Chinese *wén* ultimately derive from the basic meaning ‘decorative patterns’ (produced by painting, carving or embroidering). Thus, as shown by the carving metaphor for moral edification discussed above, the ‘decorative patterns’ (*wén*) of moral perfection are applied to the noble man (*jūnzǐ*) from the outside rather than being the result of a process of growing or cultivating. In contrast, the Modern English uses of the word *culture* to refer to the concept of a ‘set of conventionalized behavior’ derives from earlier uses of the word in the meaning ‘to grow or cultivate [plants and crops].’ It retains these connotations when used to refer to the ‘culture of

¹⁴³ Another direct equation of *wén* and *lǐ* can be found in *Xúnzǐ* 13.7, which states that the Good person (*rén rén* 仁人) “takes rites and duty as his externally visible patterns (*wén*).” 禮義以為文。

¹⁴⁴ Obviously, the term *wén* was also used in a host of other senses, e.g., ‘written graph’, ‘tattoo,’ ‘striped (tiger),’ etc. The four meanings listed here only include the metacultural uses of *wén* and their precursors.

a gentleman,' which is ostensibly acquired through a long process of cultivation and nurturing of certain qualities through education and moral discipline.

Second, as aptly phrased by Morris-Suzuki (1995:762), the Modern English word *culture* is heavily “burdened by the karma of previous incarnations.” Indeed, the complex profusion of technical definitions of *culture* in anthropological theories, as well as numerous different meanings in colloquial usage, has made the use of the term in the study of pre-modern societies especially precarious. Thus, rather than dealing with the hermeneutical problems caused by using a language-specific parochial metacultural term such as English *culture* as an analytical category in studies of pre-Qín conceptualizations of metaculture, it is better to try to reconstruct the meaning of a language-specific metacultural term such as *wén* based on how it is used in the pre-Qín texts themselves.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provide a genealogy of the metacultural concept of *wén*, which has been neglected in the otherwise vast literature on the term. In section 2.1, I argue that pre-Zhànguó uses of *wén* in bronze inscriptions, and in the *Shī* to refer to positive attributes of individuals of noble or royal birth, mean ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ rather than ‘accomplished,’ as proposed by Falkenhausen (1996). I also argue that these meanings derive from the basic meaning ‘decorative pattern’ through regular diachronic processes of metaphorical extension and abstraction. Furthermore, I argue that possessing a beautiful and awe-inspiring appearance was not conceived of as an acquired property. Wearing clothes embroidered with rank-indicating emblems (*wén*) and being equipped with lavishly decorated (*wén*) accoutrements signaling ‘dignity’ and ‘authority’ (*wēi*) was the prerogative of members of the royal family and high nobility, i.e., the

jūnzǐ, in the aristocratic sense of ‘noblemen.’ One of this chapter’s main proposals is that pre-Zhànguó uses of *wén* referred to having an ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ physical appearance, rather than to acquired moral traits. This analysis of *wén* helps us avoid the anachronistic interpretations of *wén* in moral terms often found in the traditional commentarial tradition, and it improves our understanding of the role played by physical appearance in the construction of pre-Zhànguó social hierarchies.

At a second stage represented by the *Zuǒzhuàn*, *wén* in the sense ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ began to be reanalyzed in moral terms, thereby giving rise to new adjectival uses referring to the ‘moral refinement’ of the noble man. This development happened at the same time as the reinterpretation of the term *jūnzǐ* from an aristocratic ‘nobleman’ to ‘noble man’ in the sense of morally edified person. Nevertheless, *wén* was still often associated with having an ‘awe-inspiring’ (*wēi*) and ‘beautiful’ (*měi*) appearance.

During a third stage represented by the *Lúnyǔ*, moral uses of *wén* began to dominate. It was also during this stage that adjectival *wén* in the sense ‘morally refined’ was first applied to dynasties (as in *Lúnyǔ* 3.14, discuss above). Nominalized versions of this use of *wén* then gave rise to metacultural uses of *wén* referring to the ‘moral refinement’ of the Zhōu, e.g., the ideal ‘patterns of social mores and conventionalized practices established by the former kings’ referred to by the expression *sī wén* in *Lúnyǔ* 9.5.

Finally, in the last stage (ca. 3rd century BCE) represented here by the *Xúnzǐ*, *wén* came to be defined explicitly as an **acquired** ‘moral refinement’ that could be obtained even by people of lowly background (*bǐrén*) and common people (*pǐfū* 匹夫). It is also in the *Xúnzǐ* that nominal *wén* used to refer to the ‘ideal conventional patterns’ of transmitted practices, such as music and sacrifice, is first mentioned explicitly as having been established by the former kings.

Translating *wén* in texts from before the Zhànguó period as ‘culture/cultured’ or ‘civilization/civil’ is clearly anachronistic. At that time, members of the royal family and noblemen dressed in clothes with emblems (*wén*) and insignia and used decorated (*wén*) implements in order to display their authority (*wēi*) and status and to awe (*wèi*) underlings into submission and obedience. Even in Zhànguó texts, translating metacultural uses of *wén* as ‘culture’ is still problematic. Deriving from a root that means to grow and cultivate, the words *culture* and *cultured* still retain these meanings. In contrast, pre-Qín metacultural *wén* ultimately derives from the concrete meaning ‘decorative patterns’ (such as, for example, the patterns carved onto jade vessels) and still retains such a connotation in its abstract uses to refer to the ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*) of the *jūnzǐ*. Furthermore, the Modern English concepts of ‘culture’ referring to (i) ‘human civilization’ and (ii) the anthropological notion of ‘the set of conventionalized behaviors of a group’ are concepts that developed in Britain and the United States in the 17th to the 20th centuries. Consequently, they represent language- and culture-specific conceptualizations that are very different from those found in pre-Qín texts. Therefore, since the English word *culture* and the Old Chinese word *wén* refer to different parochial language-specific concepts, using one to translate the other is highly problematic. Instead, we stand to gain more by reconstructing the pre-Qín conceptualizations of notions of ‘patterns of conventionalized behavior’ based on the specific uses of the term *wén* in pre-Qín texts.

Chapter 3 Disputers of *Wén*

3.1 Introduction

Although metacultural concepts of *wén* entered the shared vocabulary of the literate elite during the Zhànguó period, specialists of statecraft and moral philosophy differed on how these concepts should be used. As shown in chapter 2, metacultural uses of *wén* first emerged in texts such as the *Zuǒzhuàn* and the *Lúnyǔ* in the 5th and 4th century BCE reaching their fullest development in the *Xúnzǐ* in the 3rd century BCE. In these texts, metacultural *wén* is discussed in highly positive terms as both the ‘ideal patterns of conventionalized behavior’ established by the former kings, and as the externally visible ‘moral refinement’ of ‘noble man’ (*jūnzǐ*) acquired through imitation of those ideal patterns. However, the pre-Qín corpus also contains voices that are fiercely critical of this conception of *wén*. While other works could have been included,¹⁴⁵ I will limit myself here to the *Mòzǐ*, the *Mèngzǐ* and the *Hánfēizǐ*, which I take to reflect the different intellectual milieus of the early 4th century, the late 4th century, and the 3rd century BCE, respectively.¹⁴⁶ By showing that metacultural *wén* was a fiercely debated concept in the Zhànguó

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, the following blunt criticism of *wén* in the “Shàn xìng 繕性” chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ*: “(Man-made) patterns of conventionalized behavior (*wén*) destroy innate substance (*zhì*)” 文滅質 (*Zhuāngzǐ*, “Shàn xìng 繕性”, Guō Qìngfān 郭慶藩(2008:552)).

¹⁴⁶ Except for a number of later interpolations, the material in the *Hánfēizǐ* is generally assumed to date from the late Zhànguó period and to have been edited together as a book during the Han period (Levi 1993:116-7). The dating of the *Mòzǐ* is more challenging. In terms of language and content, the different parts *Mòzǐ* have been argued to have been composed over a long period of time, see Graham (1993:336-41). Based on the criticism of *Mòzǐ* in the *Mèngzǐ*, we know that that some of the ideas attributed to *Mòzǐ* were circulating in the 4th century BCE. As for the passages from the *Mòzǐ* discussed here, I assume that they reflect the intellectual milieu of the 4th century BCE. For a recent assessment of the composition and dating of the *Mòzǐ*, see also Brown (2013).

period, this chapter provides new insight into the complex fragmentation of the Zhōu elite's understanding and evaluation of its own traditions and mores.

Both the *Hánfēizǐ* and the *Mòzǐ* reject many of the core values of Kǒngzǐ and his followers. These texts reject metacultural *wén* because it is incompatible with their respective theories of statecraft and moral philosophy. Rather than following a chronological order, I begin in section 3.2 with an analysis of *wén* in the *Hánfēizǐ*. I do so because this work is most explicit in its rejection of *wén*. Like the *Hánfēizǐ*, the *Mòzǐ*, analyzed in section 3.3, also rejects metacultural *wén*, but it does so through omission and indirect references to Rúist *wén* practices.

The conspicuous lack in the *Mèngzǐ* of discussion of the concept of *wén*, which plays a key role in both the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, seems to have been overlooked in the secondary literature. While a critical attitude towards metacultural *wén* in the *Hánfēizǐ* and the *Mòzǐ* is to be expected, the absence of metacultural *wén* in the *Mèngzǐ* is surprising. Like *Xúnzǐ*, *Mèngzǐ* was a self-proclaimed follower of the teachings of Kǒngzǐ. Since *wén* is an important concept in the *Lúnyǔ*, one would expect the *Mèngzǐ* to discuss it as well. As shown in chapter 1, the *Xúnzǐ* contains the most explicitly developed theory of metacultural *wén* in the entire pre-Qín corpus. In contrast, the word *wén* appears only four times in the *Mèngzǐ*¹⁴⁷ and it is never used to refer to the metacultural concept of *wén* as it is defined in chapter 1.

In section 3.4, I argue that the theory of lexicalized metaculture helps explain the relative importance of metacultural *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Mèngzǐ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. Traditionally, or at least since Zhū Xī (1130-1200) elevated it by including it in the *Four Books*, the *Mèngzǐ* has been considered the philosophical heir to Kǒngzǐ's teachings. In contrast, the *Xúnzǐ* was mostly relegated to a position of lesser importance for understanding Kǒngzǐ's thought. Slingerland's (2003b) analysis of the use of metaphors for self-cultivation in the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Mèngzǐ* and the

¹⁴⁷ When discounting the times it is used in names such as King Wén (Wén Wáng 文王), etc.

Xúnzǐ shows that this traditional view of these three works is grounded in a misunderstanding of the close affinities between the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. Both texts use metaphors drawn predominantly from carpentry, pottery, stone carving, etc. to conceptualize the process of moral edification. In contrast, the *Mèngzǐ* conceptualizes human nature and its cultivation mainly through agricultural metaphors. According to Slingerland, this indicates that the basic assumptions about human nature in the *Lúnyǔ* are much closer to those found in the *Xúnzǐ* than to those in the *Mèngzǐ*. Building on Slingerland's analysis, I propose that the important role played by metacultural *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, and its omission in the *Mèngzǐ*, confirm the philosophical affinities of the former two in contrast to the latter.

3.2 The *Hánfēizǐ*: metacultural *wén* versus promulgated models (*fǎ*)

As a manual of statecraft intended for the ruler, the *Hánfēizǐ* paints a picture of humankind as essentially driven by greed and fear, and it outlines an impersonal system of governance based on the distribution of punishments and rewards. Not trusting anyone and keeping his motives hidden, the ruler maintains power by retaining the ultimate authority to reward and punish. The development of virtue as the basis for interpersonal trust plays no role in the *Hánfēizǐ*'s system of governance. It therefore has little use for the Rúist edification process proposed in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, which transforms men into morally refined (*wén*) gentlemen (*jūnzǐ*) through emulation of the ideal patterns (*wén*) of the ancient sage kings. Indeed, a central component of the theory of statecraft in the *Hánfēizǐ* consists of criticizing metacultural *wén* and arguing that it should be

replaced by a system of promulgated models (法 *fǎ*) designed to regulate behavior through strict administration of punishments and rewards.¹⁴⁸

The term *wén* occurs 158 times in the *Hánfēizǐ*. Nearly 68% (107/158) of the tokens appear as part of names or posthumous titles. The various concrete and abstract meanings of the remaining 51 tokens can all be shown to be related to the basis meaning ‘[externally visible] decorative pattern or markings’ either diachronically or through various synchronic lexical processes.¹⁴⁹ I will focus here on metacultural uses of *wén*. Not surprisingly, the *Hánfēizǐ* tends to mention the metacultural conceptions of *wén*, as used in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, only to criticize it for leading people to waste resources or to subvert the government system of promotion by seeking to bypass normal routes to wealth and rank.¹⁵⁰ The *Hánfēizǐ* thus contains several passages criticizing the pernicious influence of metacultural *wén* and of the people engaged in promoting it through their pursuit of ‘polite studies’ (*wénxué zhě* 文學者), whom he identifies as the *rú* 儒:

The *rú* 儒 disorder the promulgated models (*fǎ*) through their *wén*. The independent warriors (*xiá* 俠) violate prohibitions through their martial strength. However, the ruler of men honors both. This is why there is disorder. Those who stray from the promulgated models (*fǎ*) are guilty. However, all the masters of learning are selected for office based on their polite studies (lit. ‘*wén* studies’). [...] Therefore, those who practice Goodness and duty (*rényì* 仁義), are not to be praised. If one praises them, then one would hamper [concrete] accomplishments. Those who [engage in] polite studies (lit. ‘*wén* studies’) should not be employed; if one employs them, one would disorder the promulgated models. 儒以文亂法，俠以武犯禁，而人主兼禮之，此所以亂也。夫離法者罪，而諸先生以文學取。[...] 故行仁義者非所譽，譽之則害功；文學者非所用，用之則亂法。¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ The term *fǎ* 法 has been translated as ‘laws.’ Here I have decided to translate it as ‘promulgated models’ to avoid anachronistic associations of modern Western concepts of ‘law.’ For further discussion of the concept of *fǎ* in early Chinese texts, see Brown and Sanft (2012).

¹⁴⁹ As described in detail in chapter 2, in the most concrete senses of the word it can refer to markings on animal skin (e.g. *wénhǔ* 文虎 ‘striped tiger’, *wénbào* 文豹 ‘spotted leopard’), tattoos (lit. *wénshēn* 文身 ‘lit. decorated body’), or carved or embroidered artifacts. Through metaphorical extension it can also be used in more abstract senses to refer to patterns in music, language or other aspects of human social behavior. Thus, ultimately even the metacultural uses of *wén* 文 are related to the core meaning ‘decorative patterning.’

¹⁵⁰ For discussion of the critique of the *Rú* notion of *wén* in the *Hánfēizǐ*, see also Péng Yàfēi 彭亞非 (1996:42).

¹⁵¹ *Hánfēizǐ* 49, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:449).

According to the *Hánfēizǐ*, the masters of ritual (*rú* 儒) and the independent warriors (*xiá* 俠) both constitute a potential threat to the order of the state. Although they bypass or deviate from the promulgated models (*fǎ*), the ruler still respects and promotes them for their erudition and skill in martial arts. Since the state machinery proposed by the *Hánfēizǐ* crucially relies on strict adherence to government regulations and models (*fǎ* 法), having entire groups of the population enjoying legal immunity clearly undermines the authority of the system of promulgated models and imperils the very existence of the ruler and the state. The development of the virtues of Goodness and duty (*rényì* 仁義), which are central concepts in the *Lúnyǔ*, *Mèngzǐ* and *Xúnzǐ*, sets up an alternative system of normative values which competes with, and therefore threatens, the system of promulgated models (*fǎ* 法).

The *Hánfēizǐ* outlines a state in which rewards in the shape of either material wealth or rank are based solely on one's achievements in productive labor or military service. The *Hánfēizǐ* therefore criticizes those who engage in 'polite studies' (*wénxué* 文學), obtain employment, and receive emoluments without having accumulated any merits in either of these domains¹⁵²:

¹⁵² The exact translation of the phrase *wénxué* 文學 is highly controversial. Two parses of the phrase *wénxué* seem possible: (i) 'the study of *wén*' where *wén* functions as the object of the deverbal noun *xué* 'study,' and (ii) 'refined/polite/patterned (*wén*) studies' where *wén* is the modifier of *xué* 'study.' Of these two parses, (i) is the least probable. I have yet to find any parallel construction in which nominalized transitive verbs are preceded by an indirect object. This leaves us with (ii) as the best shot.

The frequently encountered translation of *wénxué* as 'literature' or 'literary studies' is clearly an anachronistic imposition from modern Chinese. A better translation would be 'polite studies' in the 18th century sense of the word referring to the study of the 'polite arts', i.e. poetry, music, eloquence, etc. This translation fits with the second of the syntactic parses discussed above. Furthermore, the word 'polite' in the expression 'polite studies' derives historically from the word 'polished' through metaphorical extension. 'Polite' and *wén* thus share the same connotations of being 'externally applied' to human behavior through education in the same way that a decorative pattern is applied to the surface of a physical object.

Interestingly, while Legge does not list 'culture' as one of the meanings of the word *wén*, 'polite studies' does appear as one of the translations of *wén* in his index of Chinese characters and phrases where he lists the following meanings of the word: "(1) The characters of the language. [...] (2) Records, literary monuments. [...] (3) Literature, *polite studies* [...] ¹⁵² (4) Accomplished, accomplishments, elegance. [...] (5) The cause of truth. [...]" (6)

Now, if by refining polite studies (lit. ‘*wén* studies’) and rehearsing sayings and speeches one can be without the hard work of plowing and yet have the fruits of wealth; and if one can be without the dangers of war and yet have the honor of noble rank, then who among people will not do so? Hence, a hundred men will engage in knowledge and [only] one will use his physical force. When those engaging in knowledge are many, then the promulgated models will fail. If those who use physical force are few, then the state will be poor. That is why this age is disordered. 今修文學、習言談，則無耕之勞、而有富之實，無戰之危、而有貴之尊，則人孰不為也？是以百人事智而一人用力，事智者眾則法敗，用力者寡則國貧，此世之所以亂也。¹⁵³

Since the pursuit of ‘polite studies (*wénxué* 文學) can be used as shortcut to rank and material wealth (by bypassing the toils of productive labor and the dangers of a military career), it eventually becomes viewed as a possible career path even for the average person without noble birth (*pǐfū* 匹夫).¹⁵⁴ Hence, people stop tilling in order to study. As a result the fields lay in waste and the state is impoverished. According to two anecdotal accounts from the district of Zhōngmóu 中牟, the ruler’s unjustified promotion of people of learning inspired as many as half of the population to stop tilling their fields, and to sell their farms and houses in order to pursue ‘polite studies’ (*wénxué*) as a shortcut to wealth and rank.¹⁵⁵ Though this is probably a gross

文章 elegant manners and discourses; elegant institutions. [...] (7) Used as the honorary epithet, becoming in effect the name” (Legge 1861:340, highlight in bold and italics added).

¹⁵³ *Hánfēizǐ* 49, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:452).

¹⁵⁴ See *Hánfēizǐ* 49: Thus, in the calculations of the common man, nothing compares to refining [his] behavior [and] sense of duty and practicing ‘**polite studies**.’ [Once he has] refined his behavior and sense of duty then his trustworthiness is displayed and [as a consequence] he will receive office appointment. Having practiced ‘**polite studies**,’ he will become a renowned master. Having become a renowned master, his fame will be illustrious. This is what the common man considers beautiful. Thus, if one has no merit but obtains office, and if one has no rank but is illustrious, and if government is practiced in this way, then the state will by necessity be disordered and the ruler will by necessity be endangered. 然則為匹夫計者，莫如脩行義而習文學。行義脩則見信，見信則受事；文學習則為明師，為明師則顯榮；此匹夫之美也。然則無功而受事，無爵而顯榮。為有政如此，則國必亂，主必危矣。(*Hánfēizǐ* 49, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:450)).

¹⁵⁵ See *Hánfēizǐ* 32.1 and 32.4: Therefore, after Zhōngzhāng and Xūjǐ had begun to serve [as officers], the people of Zhōngmóu who abandoned their fields and [vegetable] gardens to pursued ‘**polite studies**’ (*wénxué*) [were] half [of the inhabitants] of the settlement. 故中章、胥己仕，而中牟之民墾田圃而隨文學者邑之半。(*Hánfēizǐ* 32.1, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:263)).

Therefore, in the course of one day Wáng Dēng had two Ordinary Grand Masters have audiences with the Lord. [The Lord] gave them fields and houses. [Because of this] the people of Zhōngmóu, who abandoned [their] fields [and gave up] weeding, sold their houses and [vegetable] gardens, and pursued **polite studies**) [were] half

exaggeration, in the *Hánfēizǐ* clearly points out there the contradiction between wanting to “enrich the state through agriculture and fend off foes with recruited soldiers while at the same time honoring the retainer-officials pursuing ‘polite studies’ (*wénxué zhī shì* 文學之士)”.¹⁵⁶ The only way to do away with these problems is to “abolish *wénxué* and make visible¹⁵⁷ the promulgated models and regulations” (息¹⁵⁸文學而明法度).¹⁵⁹

Since the *Hánfēizǐ*'s *fǎ*-based state machinery has no need for the ‘refinement’ (*wén*) of moral virtues advocated in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, the resources taken up by acquiring the ‘material symbols of power and authority’ (e.g., *wénzhāng* 文章 ‘emblems and insignia’) are also seen as an unnecessary waste.¹⁶⁰ Using an imagined dialogue between Duke Mù 穆公 of Qín 秦 (r. 659-621 BCE) and Yóu Yú 由余, the *Hánfēizǐ* frames its view on frugality (*jiǎn* 儉) in the form of Yóu Yú's answer to King Mù's question about why ancient kings won and lost the rule of their states.

After the Xiàhòu clan perished, the Yīn 殷 took over. [...] [Their] vessels for eating were carved and chiseled. [Their] drinking vessels were carved and engraved. [...] [Their] cushions and mats were embroidered with [decorative] patterns (*wén*). [Since] this was more lavish [than in earlier times], the states that did not submit numbered fifty-three. When the gentlemen (*jūnzǐ*) all know about [status symbols such as] emblems and insignia (*wénzhāng*), then those who submit will be

[of the inhabitants] of the settlement. 王登一日而見二中大夫，予之田宅，中牟之人鎚其田耘、賣宅圃，而隨文學者邑之半。(*Hánfēizǐ* 32.4, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:270)).

¹⁵⁶ See *Hánfēizǐ* 49: 富國以農，距敵恃卒，而貴文學之士。(*Hánfēizǐ* 49, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:450)).

The expression ‘retainer-officials pursuing **polite studies**’ (*wénxué zhī shì* 文學之士) also occurs in *Hánfēizǐ* 46: Those who study the Way and establish methods (in the fields of medicine, etc.), are people who depart from the promulgated models. Yet this age respects them and call them “retainer-officials pursuing **polite studies**.” 學道立方，離法之民也，而世尊之曰文學之士。(*Hánfēizǐ* 46, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:415)).

¹⁵⁷ Used as an adjective *míng* 明 means ‘bright.’ Here it is used as a verb in the meaning ‘to make bright’ or ‘to make visible.’

¹⁵⁸ The most common literal meaning of the word *xī* 息 is ‘to breathe.’ Through metaphorical extension it is also use in the sense ‘to rest’ or to ‘stop doing something’ (i.e., ‘to take a breather’). In this passage it is in the derived meaning ‘destroy’ or ‘abolish.’

¹⁵⁹ *Hánfēizǐ* 47, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:425). In this passage Kǒngzǐ and Mòzǐ are explicitly mentioned as parasites who pursue futile knowledge while neglecting to ‘plough and weed.’

¹⁶⁰ All the occurrences of the term *wénzhāng* 文章 in the *Hánfēizǐ* appear to refer to the externally visible appearance of rank and ‘refinement’ rather than to ‘written texts.’ For a discussion of the evolution of use of the terms *wén* and *wénzhāng* to refer to ‘text’ and ‘written compositions,’ see Kern (2001).

even fewer. Hence, I say: “Frugality is the [correct] way [of governing].” 夏后氏沒，殷人受之， [...] 食器雕琢，觴酌刻鏤，[...]，茵席雕文。此彌侈矣，而國之不服者五十三。君子皆知文章矣，而欲服者彌少。臣故曰儉其道也。¹⁶¹

This passage traces a process of continuous moral degeneration due to material extravagance from the legendary emperor Yáo 堯 down to the Shāng dynasty (aka Yīn 殷). The expression *wénzhāng* 文章 is used here to refer to the material refinement of the lives of rulers, i.e. the expensive status symbols (such as elaborately decorated vessels, chariots, palaces, cloths, etc.) that serve to visibly demonstrate the owner’s rank and power. The *Hánfēizǐ* is critical of such an ostentatious display of wealth; first because it is an unnecessary, wasteful practice in itself; and second, because it generates resentment among the ruler’s subjects which eventually brings down the entire state. The conclusion is that knowledge of status symbols such as emblems and insignia may cause fewer people to submit to the ruler’s authority.^{162 163}

In summary, in this section I have discussed three reasons why the *Hánfēizǐ* rejects metacultural *wén*. First, *wén* subverts the strict implementation of the system of promulgated models (*fǎ*) by introducing an alternative set of normative values such as Goodness and duty (*rén yì*). The *wén*-edified gentleman (*jūnzǐ*) behaves and is promoted according to a set of norms which do not necessarily conform to promulgated models (*fǎ*). Second, by rewarding people for their achievement in ‘polite studies’ (*wénxué*) rather than for their material contribution (as farmers) or for their military service, the pursuit of *wén* practices lures the common man (*pǐfū*) away from the toils of farming and the perils of warfare, which in turn impoverishes the state,

¹⁶¹ *Hánfēizǐ* 10, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:71).

¹⁶² Note that this does not mean that the *Hánfēizǐ* is against rank distinctions. He would most likely endorse the use of state-approved regalia and insignia to distinguish between the different echelons of the state bureaucracy. What he is criticizing here is unnecessary, wasteful extravagance.

¹⁶³ A similar passage describing the decline of different dynasties due to their increasing indulgence in wasteful practices related to the Zhōu elite’s ritual tradition occurs in the *Mòzǐ*. It is thus not impossible that this *Mòzǐ* passage, discussed in section 3.3 below, served as inspiration for the authors/compiler of the *Hánfēizǐ*.

leaving it vulnerable to enemy attack. Third, the ruling elite's indulgence in the procurement of lavish symbols of power and rank (*wénzhāng*) is a wasteful practice which has the potential to impoverish the state and undermine its power.¹⁶⁴

3.3 The *Mòzǐ*: against the wasteful practices of *wén*

Like the *Hánfēizǐ*, the *Mòzǐ* 墨子 rejects both the metacultural concept of *wén* embraced by the Kǒngzǐan tradition, as well as its material expression in elaborately decorated ritual objects and markers of institutionalized social status.¹⁶⁵ However, unlike the *Hánfēizǐ*, which explicitly rejects metacultural *wén*, the *Mòzǐ*, which is also against this Rú concept, never mentions it directly. Instead its take on metacultural *wén* is expressed indirectly in criticism of Rúist *wén* practices (e.g., elaborate funeral practices, musical performances, etc.) and the decorated (*wén*) artifacts (e.g., ornamented chariots, embroidered garments, etc.) which were part of the material manifestation of the institutionalized social hierarchy of early Zhōu society.

The *Mòzǐ* proposes an anti-elitist, utilitarian moral philosophy based on consequentialist maximization of benefit (*lì* 利) for everyone.¹⁶⁶ It therefore rejects the notion of *wén* which we find in the *Zuǒzhuàn*, the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, both in the sense of 'moral refinement' of the noble man (*jūnzǐ*), and in its older use described in section 2.1, chapter 2 (i.e., the 'awe-inspiringly beautiful' appearance of the nobleman manifested in lavishly decorated ritual objects and markers of institutionalized social status, such as emblems [*wén*] and insignia). Like the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, the *Mòzǐ* supports promoting people to official positions based on

¹⁶⁴ The *Shāngjūnshū*, which I have not discussed here, is similar to the *Hánfēizǐ* in its criticism of metacultural *wén*.

¹⁶⁵ For the dating of the 'core chapters' of the *Mòzǐ*, see Graham (1993), Maeder (1992). See also Brown (2013).

¹⁶⁶ I am using the terms *consequentialist* and *consequentialism* to refer to the *Mòzǐ* as defined in Van Norden (2007).

competence and moral worth.¹⁶⁷ But in contrast to the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* (where moral worth is the result of a long and slow edification process based on the imitation of ‘the ideal prescriptive patterns of conventionalized behavior’ instituted by the former kings), in the consequentialist philosophy of the *Mòzǐ* there is a more direct line between knowing what is right and doing it. Hence, according to the *Mòzǐ*, engaging in Rúist ‘polite studies’ (*wénxué* 文學) to slowly shape one’s moral constitution is an unnecessary and wasteful practice of elite snobbery.¹⁶⁸ Rather than measuring a man’s worth by his mastery of the *Shī* and the elite decorum manifested in externally observable ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*) of his appearance and demeanor, the *Mòzǐ* examines the extent to which his actions contribute to the maximization of benefit (*lì* 利) for the state and its people.¹⁶⁹

The *Mòzǐ* views the wasteful practices of rulers as a source of social disorder. In its version of history, the ancient sage kings did not engage in wasteful practices such as the procurement of costly garments embroidered with emblems (*wén*), elaborately decorated chariots (*wénxuān* 文軒), and other artifacts that mainly served to display status and authority. Instead of emphasizing external appearance (*wài* 外), they are said to have focused on practical utility.

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, the “Promoting the worthy (*Shàng xián* 尚賢)” chapter in the *Mòzǐ* 墨子.

¹⁶⁸ For discussion of the critique of the Rú notion of *wén* found in the *Mòzǐ*, see also Péng Yàfēi 彭亚非 (1996:42).

¹⁶⁹ Rather than promulgated models (*fǎ*), the *Mòzǐ* bases its theory of statecraft on the concept of ‘universal’ or ‘impartial’ caring’ (*jiān’ài* 兼愛). Once people understand that it is in their own interest, they will spontaneously cease warfare and begin working for the well-being of others. The expression *jiān’ài* 兼愛 has been translated as ‘universal love,’ see Watson (1963:39-49). As pointed out by Graham (1989), the translation ‘universal love’ “is convenient but rather misleading; it is both too vague (*chien* implies ‘for each’ rather than ‘for all’) and too warm (the Mohist concept of *ài* refers to an unemotional will to benefit people and dislike of harming them). The Mohists were dour people whose ears were open to the demands of justice rather than to the appeal of love.” (Graham 1989:41) suggests that ‘Concern for Everyone’ as a more appropriate translation. Schwartz (1985:149) proposes to translate the Mohist concept of *jiān’ài* as “an impartial reasoned concern for all men as ends in themselves.” As suggested by Edward Slingerland (p.c.), ‘impartial caring’ may be a better translation. Gernet’s (1999:86) French translation ‘altruisme généralisé’ (lit. ‘generalized altruisme’) may indeed be preferred over both the somewhat vague and misleading ‘universal love’ and the slightly better ‘impartial caring.’ “The point of *jiān’ài* is not that one should nourish feelings of ‘love’ for other people. The *Mòzǐ* is not interested in cultivating human emotions. Rather, the *jiān’ài* 兼愛 is based on a calculated rational decision to help other since this, in turn, will maximize benefit (*lì* 利) for oneself.

Therefore, when the sages made clothes and garments, they [were made to] fit their bodies and harmonize with the skin and that was sufficient. [Clothes were] not [made] to dazzle the ears and the eyes in order to impress ignorant people. [...] [As for] carvings and engravings, pattern-(decorations) and [variegated] colors (*wéncǎi* 文采), [people] did not know that they were delightful. [...] Therefore the people [...] were not led astray by external things (*wài* 外). Thus, the people were frugal and easy to govern and the ruler was restrained in his use of resources and easily supported. 故聖人之為衣服，適身體和肌膚而足矣。非榮耳目而觀愚民也。[...] 刻鏤文采，不知喜也。[...] 故民 [...] 不感於外也。是以其民儉而易治，其君用財節而易贍也。¹⁷⁰

The preceding context of this passage describes how the moral decline of the rulers of the Xià 夏 and Shāng 商 dynasties was due to their increasingly opulent display of material wealth and status symbols.¹⁷¹ The *Mòzǐ* thus views ‘pattern(-decorations) and colors’ (*wéncǎi* 文采) as signs of moral depravation and decline. Thus, in the view of the *Mòzǐ*, garments should be designed simply to fit and to keep the body comfortable, not to ‘impress ignorant people’ (*guān yú mín* 觀愚民). In such a world, no resources will be wasted and the people will be frugal (*jiǎn*), i.e., easy to govern (*yì zhì* 易治).

Unlike the theories of metacultural *wén* found in the *Zuǒzhuàn*, the *Lúnyǔ*, and the *Xúnzǐ*, which are based on a social hierarchy manifested in outer appearance and regulated by sumptuary rites, the *Mòzǐ* finds the maintenance of such a system to be an unnecessary waste of precious resources and labor. For example, see *Mòzǐ* 6.4, which spells out the negative consequences following from over-indulgence in displays of material wealth:

The rulers of the present are different from this [this=the way the sages behaved] when they have clothes made. Although they have light and warm[clothes for] winter and light and cool [clothes for] summer, they still heavily tax the hundred surnames, forcefully robbing the people of their material possessions of clothes and food, in order to make elaborately embroidered, patterned and colored, gorgeous garments. [They] use cast bronze¹⁷² to make hooks, and pearls and jade to make girdle ornaments. Female workers make the patterned and colored [garments] and male

¹⁷⁰ *Mòzǐ* 6.3, Johnston (2010:40-41).

¹⁷¹ See the discussion of a similar passage in the *Hánfēizǐ* in section 3.2 above.

¹⁷² Here *jīn* 金 probably refers to ‘metal.’ Since bronze was widely used at the time, it is likely to be the metal referred to here.

workers make carvings and engravings to wear on the body. All these are for the adornment of the body. They really add little to its warmth. Materials and [human] strength are completely spent. So viewed on this background, clothing is made not for the body but for brilliant appearance. Therefore, the people are dissolute and difficult to rule, and the ruler will be lavish and extravagant and will be difficult to remonstrate with. [...] If the rulers sincerely desire All under Heaven to have order, and hate to see it in disorder, then when they have clothing made they must moderate themselves. 當今之主，其為衣服則與此異矣，冬則輕煥，夏則輕清，皆已具矣。必厚作斂於百姓，暴奪民衣食之財，以為錦繡文采靡曼之衣，鑄金以為鉤，珠玉以為珮，女工作文采，男工作刻鏤以為身服，此非云益煥之情也。單財勞力，畢歸之於無用也。以此觀之，其為衣服非為身體，皆為觀好，是以其民淫僻而難治，其君奢侈而難諫也。[...]君實欲天下之治而惡其亂，當為衣服不可不節。¹⁷³

Once again, we see a close link between *wén* in the concrete sense of ‘decoration’ and *wén* in the more abstract/metaphorical sense of ‘decoration’ as a symbol of social distinction. The *Lúnyǔ*, and the *Xúnzǐ*, which value ‘moral refinement’ (*wén*), also promote its physical manifestation in concrete ‘decorative patterns’ on emblems and insignia (*wénzhāng* 文章) in order to maintain a harmoniously stratified society. Conversely, the *Mòzǐ*, which rejects ‘moral refinement’, also finds the production of physical decorations unnecessary for, or even detrimental to, the functioning of government.¹⁷⁴

As shown above, the composers of the *Mòzǐ* are fiercely critical of the metacultural concepts of *wén* developed by Kǒngzǐ and his followers. However, unlike the explicit criticism of metacultural *wén* in the *Hánfēizǐ*, the *Mòzǐ* never explicitly mentions metacultural *wén*. The *Xúnzǐ* is the first pre-Qín work to explicitly refer to the *Mòzǐ*’s take on metacultural *wén*. A concise formulation of the fundamental difference between the utilitarianism of the *Mòzǐ* and the concept of metacultural *wén* as defined in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* is found in the *Xúnzǐ* 21:

¹⁷³ *Mòzǐ* 6.4. This translation is an adaptation of Johnston (2010:40-43). In turn, Johnston (2010) appears to draw on the translation by Mei (1929).

¹⁷⁴ In contrast, as discussed in chapter 2, in the *Zuǒzhuàn* the *Lúnyǔ*, and the *Xúnzǐ* the ruler’s engagement in *wén* practices and his *wén* appearance and demeanor is considered to central to successful government.

Mòzǐ was blinded by utility (*yòng* 用) and did not understand *wén*. 墨子蔽於用而不知文。¹⁷⁵

While the *Mòzǐ* judges value in terms of ‘utility’ (*yòng* 用) and the maximization of benefit (*lì* 利), the *Xúnzǐ* emphasizes a moral dimension of objects and actions. In the *Xúnzǐ*, the appearance and demeanor of a ‘gentleman’ must be ‘elegantly patterned’ (*wén*) by traditional social mores (*lǐ* 禮), and his garments should be ‘ornamented’ (*wén*) so as to properly indicate his rank and status.¹⁷⁶

That the *Xúnzǐ* found it necessary to criticize Mòzǐ for his lack of understanding of *wén* shows that metacultural *wén* was a topic of dispute in the late Zhànguó period. The passage from *Xúnzǐ* 10.9, discussed above in section 2.3, explicitly emphasizes the need for rulers to ‘beautify’ (*měi* 美) and ‘decorate’ (*shì* 飾) themselves with ‘emblems’ (*wén*) and status symbols in order to “fill the eyes of the people” (*yǐ sāi qí mù* 以塞其目) and thereby awe them into submission.¹⁷⁷ However, as if anticipating the criticism of the followers of the teachings of the *Mòzǐ*, *Xúnzǐ* 10.1 states that emblems (*wén*) and insignia (*zhāng*) only served to maintain the social hierarchy and were ‘not intended for ostentatious display’ (*bù qiú qí guān* 不求其觀).¹⁷⁸

The contrasting takes on *wén* found in the *Mòzǐ* and the *Xúnzǐ* are illustrated most clearly by their views on music and funeral practices. As we have seen in section 2.3, the *Xúnzǐ* firmly

¹⁷⁵ *Xúnzǐ* 21.4, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:392), tr. adapted from Knoblock (1988-1994:III, 102).

¹⁷⁶ See section 2.3 in chapter 2 for a more detailed description of the theory of *wén* in the *Xúnzǐ*.

¹⁷⁷ See *Xúnzǐ* 10.9:

The former kings and sages [...] knew that if those who were rulers of men and superiors did not make [themselves] beautiful (*měi* 美) and did not decorate (*shì* 飾) [themselves], then they would not be able to unify the people; [...] that if they were not awe-inspiring (*wēi* 威) and strong, then they would not be able to prevent aggression and conquer ferocious enemies. Hence, [...] [one] must chisel and polish [stones], [and one] must carve and inlay [metals]; and emblems (*wén*) and insignia (*zhāng*) must have *fū fū* designs in order to fill the eyes [of their subjects]. 先王聖人 [...] 知夫為人主上者，不美不飾之不足以一民也[...] 不威不強之不足以禁暴勝悍也。故[...]必將錙琢刻鏤，黼黻文章，以塞其目。(Xúnzǐ 10.9, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:185))

For discussion of this passage see footnote 124 above.

¹⁷⁸ See *Xúnzǐ* 10.1, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:180).

states that one of the greatest contributions of the former kings was to establish (*lì* 立) the ideal patterns (*wén*) regulating and structuring music and mourning. In contrast, the *Mòzǐ* contains two chapters entitled “Against Music (*Fēi Yuè* 非樂)”¹⁷⁹ and “Moderation in Funerals (*Jié Zàng* 節葬)”¹⁸⁰ in which Rúist emphasis on lavish musical performances and funeral rites is fiercely criticized. For the *Mòzǐ*, such practices were simply a waste of resources. For the *Xúnzǐ*, the ideal patterns (*wén*) of music and rites were the very foundation of peaceful rule, without which humanity would lack a means to maintain social hierarchies and, as a consequence, return to the state of bird and beasts.

3.4 The overlooked neglect of *wén* in the *Mèngzǐ*

Unlike the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, in which the metacultural concept of *wén* plays a central role, the *Mèngzǐ* barely uses the word *wén*.¹⁸¹ Surprisingly, this conspicuous absence appears to have eluded scholarly attention. Both *Mèngzǐ* and *Xúnzǐ* were self-proclaimed followers of Kǒngzǐ, who according to the *Lúnyǔ*, viewed *wén* as a key element of his teachings. The neglect of *wén* in the *Mèngzǐ* cannot be arbitrary and therefore needs to be explained. In this section, I argue that approaching this problem within the framework of lexicalized metaculture makes it possible to identify the issue more clearly. It also allows us to show that the assumed semantic equivalence between *wén* and the modern English word *culture*, which is often found in the secondary literature, is partially to blame for the overlooked absence of discussion of metacultural *wén* in the *Mèngzǐ*.

¹⁷⁹ *Mòzǐ* 32, Johnston (2010:306-317).

¹⁸⁰ *Mòzǐ* 25, Johnston (2010:210-231).

¹⁸¹ For an alternative analysis of the concept of *wén* in the *Xúnzǐ*, see Chén Yǒngchāo 陈泳超 (1997).

I argue that the differences in the use of the concept of *wén* in the *Mèngzǐ*, on the one hand, versus the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, on the other, stem from differences in basic assumptions about the role of tradition in the formation of a morally noble man (*jūnzǐ* 君子). I argue that the connotation of metacultural *wén* as an ‘(externally applied) decorative pattern’ carries with it metaphorical implications which are incompatible with what Slingerland (2003b) refers to as the ‘internalist’ theory of ethics in the *Mèngzǐ*,¹⁸² but which also constitute a perfect match for the ‘externalist’ assumptions about the source of normative values found in both the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*.

Traditionally, the *Mèngzǐ* has been considered to be closer to the *Lúnyǔ* than the *Xúnzǐ*. However, as persuasively argued by Slingerland (2003b), the latter texts’ predominant use of craft metaphors in discussions of the role of human nature (*xìng* 性) and education contrast sharply with the predominant use of agriculture metaphors in the *Mèngzǐ*. This indicates that the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* share an ‘externalist’ view of the source of normative values, in contrast to the more ‘internalist’ view found in the *Mèngzǐ*.¹⁸³ To the best of my knowledge, scholars have not yet observed that this contrast is supported by the fact that metacultural uses of *wén* play a central role in the moral philosophies of *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, while it is virtually absent from the *Mèngzǐ*. While the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* make metacultural *wén* a key concept in their externalist moral philosophy and theory of moral edification, the *Mèngzǐ*’s belief in innate normative values reduces the need for the guidance of ‘external patterns’ in the path to sagehood. Hence *wén* is

¹⁸² Other internalist works of moral philosophy such as the *Lǎozǐ* 老子 and the *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子 also either omit discussing metacultural *wén*, or reject it outright, see Slingerland (2003b).

¹⁸³ I use the terms ‘externalism’ and ‘internalism’ as defined in Slingerland (2003b). Externalist thinkers (such as the composers of the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*) assume knowledge of normative values to be external to human nature. That is, normative values are not something human nature has from birth. It must be acquired from external sources (e.g., the sages, the transmitted traditions of the former kings, etc.). In contrast, for internalist thinkers, human nature comes equipped with internal access to normative values. “[W]e already are good, and we merely need to allow this virtuous potential to realize itself. *Zhuangzi*, *Laozi* and the *Mencius* fall into this camp.” (Slingerland 2003b:12)

never explicitly discussed as a theoretical concept, but only used in discussion of other concepts or in non-metacultural senses.

The graph <文> occurs a total of 51 times in the *Mèngzǐ*. Of these, 47 occurrences form part of proper names, with the expression King Wén (*Wén wáng* 文王) occurring 36 times. None of the 4 non-name occurrences of *wén* appear in passages which explicitly discuss the concept of metacultural *wén*.¹⁸⁴ In order to show that the metacultural concept of *wén* only plays a peripheral role in the *Mèngzǐ*, it is useful to examine each of these four non-name occurrences in some detail, especially since the exact meaning of some of them is rather controversial.

In the expression ‘pattern-embroidered garments’ (*wén xiù* 文繡) in M6A17, *wén* is used in its most concrete sense of ‘ornamental decoration’.

Mèngzǐ said, [...] The *Shī* say: “being inebriated with drink; having eaten our fill with virtue.” [this passage] states that, if one is filled with [the virtues of] Goodness and duty, then one does not envy [other] people’s [enjoyment of the] taste of fatty meat and millet; and if one enjoys a fine and broad reputation, then one does not envy [other] people’s pattern-embroidered [garments]. 孟子曰：「[...]。《詩》云：『既醉以酒，既飽以德。』言飽乎仁義也，所以不願人之膏粱之味也。令聞廣譽施於身，所以不願人之文繡也。」¹⁸⁵

The expression *wén xiù* literally means ‘patterned-embroidered.’ In this passage it is used as a *pars pro toto* synecdoche referring to ‘pattern-embroidered garments.’ The contrast between concrete material luxuries and status-symbols such as ‘patterned-embroidered garments’ *wén xiù*, and ‘fatty meat and millet’ *gāo liáng* 膏粱 on the one hand, and immaterial qualities such as moral virtue and fine reputation, on the other, supports reading *wén* in the basic concrete sense of ‘externally applied decorative-pattern.’

¹⁸⁴ Chén Yǒngchāo 陈泳超 (1997) observes that *wén* occurs four times in the *Mèngzǐ*, in contrast to the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* in which it occurs much more frequently. However, since his article is about the importance of *wén* in the *Xúnzǐ*, he does not discuss its absence from the *Mèngzǐ*.

¹⁸⁵ M6A17, tr. adapted from Lau (1970:169).

In *M5A4*, *wén* refers to ‘rhetoric’ or the ‘ornamental structuring’ of a linguistic utterance.¹⁸⁶

This is not what this [ode in the] *Shī* is about. It is about those who toil in the service of the king, and as a consequence, are not above to care for for their parents. They were saying, “None of this is not the king’s business. Why are we alone overburdened?” Hence in explaining a[n ode in the] *Shī*, one should not allow *wén* to obscure the statements, nor the statements to obscure then intended meaning. The right way is to meet the intention of the poet with sympathetic understanding. If one were merely to take the statements literally, then there is the [ode] “Yún Hàn” [in the] *Shī* which says, “Of the remaining multitudes of Zhōu not a single man survived.” If this [saying] is taken to be literal truth, it would mean that not a single Zhōu subject survived. 曰：「是詩也，非是之謂也，勞於王事而不得養父母也。曰：『此莫非王事，我獨賢勞也。』故說詩者，不以文害辭，不以辭害志；以意逆志，是為得之。如以辭而已矣。〈雲漢〉之詩曰：『周餘黎民，靡有孑遺。』信斯言也，是周無遺民也。¹⁸⁷

The exact meaning of the term *wén* in this passage is debated in the scholarly tradition. As shown by Hú Wèi 胡蔚 (2006:79-80), the different interpretations of *wén* can roughly be divided into three group: (i) ‘word(s)’ or ‘graph(s)’ (Mod. Mand. *zì* 字); (ii) ‘phrases’ (Mod. Mand. *cí* 辭) or ‘paragraphs/sentences’ (Mod. Mand. *jù* 句); or (iii) ‘(rhetorical) ornamentation’ or ‘stylistic embellishment.’

The first reading of *wén* as referring to ‘word(s)’ or ‘graph(s)’ was proposed by Chéng Hào 程顥 (1032-1085), Chéng Yí 程頤 (1033-1107) and Zhū Xī (1130-1200)¹⁸⁸ in the Song dynasty.¹⁸⁹ However, the reading of *wén* as referring to ‘words’ in this passage does not seem plausible and will not be discussed further here.

¹⁸⁶ For discussion of the meaning of *wén* in this passage, see also Dīng Xiùjú 丁秀菊 (2011), Hú Wèi 胡蔚 (2006), Zhōu Yùkǎi 周裕楷 (2002).

¹⁸⁷ *M5A4*, tr. adapted from Lau (1970:142). Hinton’s (1998b:166) translation 不以文害辭，不以辭害志 as “never let eloquence obscure words, and never let words obscure intent” is better than Lau’s (1970:142) “one should not allow the words to get in the way of the sentence, nor the sentence to get in the way of sense.”

¹⁸⁸ “文、字也。辭、語也。” (Xú Dé míng 徐德明 2001).

¹⁸⁹ While *wén* can be used to refer to ‘sign’ or ‘written graphs’ in the *Zuǒzhuàn*, this is clearly not how it is used here. For a discussion of these examples see Xuē Yàjūn 薛亚军 (1999).

Zhào Qí 趙岐 (108-201) proposed to read *wén* in *M5A4* as ‘the compositions (*wénzhāng*) of the retainer-officials (*shì*).’¹⁹⁰ However, interpreting *wén* to refer to ‘phrases,’ ‘passages’ or ‘compositions’ does not seem to make much sense in this context. And, as Kern (2001) has convincingly argued, the word *wénzhāng* does not begin to refer to ‘written compositions’ before the Han dynasty.

I suggest that the most plausible meaning of *wén* in *M5A4* is the ‘rhetorical patterning/decoration’ of an already functionally complete linguistic utterance. This reading of *wén* is supported by other Zhànguó texts from the *Zuǒzhuàn* to the *Hánfēizǐ*.¹⁹¹ The following passage from the *Zuǒzhuàn* is often taken as evidence that *wén* can mean ‘rhetorical ornamentation’ of utterances.

Zhòngní said, “The ‘Zhì’ has it: ‘The language is to be adequate to the intention; and rhetoric (*wén*) is to be adequate to that which is said.’ If one did not say anything, who would know one’s intention? And if the language lacked rhetoric (*wén*), it would not go far. Zhèng’s invasion of Chén during Jin’s hegemony would not have been any sort of accomplishment if it were not for rhetorical statements (*wéncí*). Take care with statements.¹⁹² 仲尼曰：「志有之：『言以足志，文以足言。』不言，誰知其志？言之無文，行而不遠。晉為伯，鄭入陳，非文辭不為功。慎辭哉！」¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ “文、詩之文章，所引以事也” *SSJZS* (1980:2735).

¹⁹¹ E.g. the *Xúnzǐ* 6.1 where *wén* is used as a transitive verb: “For example, in the present age, [there are those who] dress up deviant theories and who [rhetorically] decorate (*wén*) wicked sayings in order to bring about confusion in All under Heaven.” 假今之世，飾邪說，文姦言，以梟亂天下 (*Xúnzǐ* 6.1) As observed by Knoblock (1988-1994:I, 301, fn. 24), ‘wicked sayings’ (姦言) are mentioned in *Xúnzǐ* 5.6 as referring to teachings which are “inconsistent with the teachings of the Ancient Kings and not in accord with ritual and moral principles.”

¹⁹² The word *cí* 辭 can mean both ‘word(s)’ and ‘utterance(s)/statement(s)/saying(s)’. In this respect it is similar to the English term *word* which in earlier stages of the language could refer to both monomorphemic words and to sentences and larger discourse units made of combinations of words, as reflected in the modern English locution ‘to have a word with someone,’ which clearly means having a conversation with someone rather than uttering a single word. Similarly, in the context of *M5A4* the term *cí* 辭 clearly refers to functionally complete linguistic utterances that are produced to achieve a certain intended effect (*zhì* 志).

¹⁹³ *Zuǒzhuàn*, Xiang 25.10, tr. adapted from Schaberg (2001a:83). For an alternative translation of this passage, see also Owen (1992:29-30). For an original, albeit not very plausible, analysis of *wén* in this passage as referring to ‘writing’ or ‘written language,’ see Zhōu Yùkǎi 周裕鍇 (2003)

This *Zuǒzhuàn* passage illustrates that *wén* and *cí* often occur together in the phrasal expression ‘rhetorically decorated statements/sayings.’¹⁹⁴ The following passage from the *Hánfēizǐ* also clearly shows that *wén* can refer to the ‘rhetorical ornamentation’ of ‘statements/sayings’ (*cí*).

The King Chǔ said to Tián Jiū: “As for Mòzǐ, he was known for his learning. [...] but why is it that his sayings are generally not eloquent? Tián Jiū replied saying: “[...] Among the people of Chǔ there was one who was selling his pearls in Zhèng. He made boxes of magnolia and fragranced them with cassia and pepper. He decorated them with pears and jade, adorned them with roses, and joined them together with kingfisher feathers. People from Zhèng bought his [pearl]cases, but returned his pearls. This can be called being good at selling cases but cannot be called being good at peddling pearls.

As for the discoursees [of the persuaders and masters of statecraft] of the present age, they are all [nothing but] the words of eloquent theories and [rhetorically] decorated statements (*wéncí*). The ruler of men *sees the (rhetorical) decorations (wén) but forgets the utility*. Mòzǐ’s theories transmit the Way of the former kings and discuss the sayings of the sages in order to spread them and announce them to people. If he had embellished his sayings (*cí*), then I’m afraid that people would have *embraced the (rhetorical) decorations (wén) and forgotten the straightforwardness (of the message)*. *That is, that they would have used the (rhetorical) decorations (wén) to harm the utility*. This is the same kind of phenomenon as the man from Chǔ peddling pearls. Therefore, his (=Mòzǐ’s) words are generally not eloquent. 楚王謂田鳩曰：「墨子者，顯學也。[...]其言多而不辯何也？」曰：「[...]楚人有賣其珠於鄭者，為木蘭之櫃，薰以桂椒，綴以珠玉，飾以玫瑰，輯¹⁹⁵以翡翠¹⁹⁶，鄭人買其櫃而還其珠，此可謂善賣櫃矣，未可謂善鬻珠也。今世之談也，皆道辯說文辭之言，人主覽其文而忘有用。墨子說，傳先王之道，論聖人之言以宣告人，若辯其辭，則恐人懷其文忘其直，以文害用也。此與楚人鬻珠[...]同類，故其言多不辯。」¹⁹⁷

Notice the similarity between the phrase ‘harm utility with *wén*’ (*yǐ wén hài yòng* 以文害用) used in this passage from the *Hánfēizǐ*, and the phrase ‘harm statements with *wén*’ (*yǐ wén hài cí* 以文害辭) used in *M5A4*. In sum, there is ample support in the pre-Qín corpus for reading *wén*

¹⁹⁴ The expression *wéncí* occurs several times in the *Zuǒzhuàn*, see “Xiang 25.7”, “Xiang 25.10”, “Xiang 27.4”, “Zhao 13.3”, “Zhao 27.9.”

¹⁹⁵ According to Wáng Lì 王力 (Wáng Lì 王力 2003), *jí* 輯 in this context means *liánzhuì* 連綴 ‘join together; put together.’

¹⁹⁶ *Fěicùi* 翡翠 can refer to: (i) bright green-blue jade, jadeite; or (ii) kingfisher feathers.

¹⁹⁷ *Hánfēizǐ* 32, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:266).

in *M5A4* as referring to ‘rhetorical patterning/decoration’ of an already functionally complete linguistic utterance.¹⁹⁸

The meaning of *wén* in *M4B21* is controversial. Lau’s (2004:92) reading of *wén* in this passage as ‘rhetoric’ or ‘(rhetorical) style,’ which is also followed by Van Norden (2008:108), seems the most plausible.

Mèngzǐ said: “After the traces of the true King had gone, the [composition] *Shī* also ended. After [the composition of the] *Shī* had ended, the *Chūnqiū* was composed. The *Shèng* of the Jìn, the *Táo Wù* of Chǔ and the *Chūnqiū* of Lǚ are [all] one [kind of historical records]. The events recorded [in them] concern Duke Huán of Qí and Duke Wén of Jìn, and the style (*wén*) is that of the official historian. Kǒngzǐ said, ‘As for their moral instructions, I have surreptitiously extracted them.’” 孟子曰：「王者之跡熄而《詩》亡，《詩》亡然後《春秋》作。晉之《乘》、楚之《檮杌》、魯之《春秋》，一也。其事則齊桓、晉文，其文則史。孔子曰：『其義則丘竊取之矣。』」¹⁹⁹

This passage describes which aspects of the study of historical records Kǒngzǐ considered to be most important. The study of history was, as discussed in chapter 2, one of the topics recommended by Kǒngzǐ as contributing to the refinement (*wén*) of the gentleman (*jūnzǐ* 君子). By emphasizing both the events recorded (*shì* 事) and the historiographical style in which the records were made (*wén*), the *Mèngzǐ* thus argues that one should extract the moral instruction (*yì* 義) of historical works from both the historical examples of good and bad behavior in the events recorded therein (*shì* 事) as well as from the style (*wén*) in which they are composed.

The following passage from *Lúnyǔ* 6.18, discussed in chapter 2, sheds further light on the relationship between *shǐ* 史 and ‘acquired refinement’ (*wén*):

¹⁹⁸ Notice the interesting contrast of *wén* and utility (*yòng*) in the discussion of Mòzǐ’s sayings (*cí*). Although *wén* here clearly refers to ‘rhetorical decoration,’ it does evoke the contrast between *yòng* and metacultural *wén* in *Xúnzǐ* 21.4 discussed in section 3.3 above.

¹⁹⁹ *M4B21*, tr. adapted from Lau (2004:92).

The Master said, “If raw substance overwhelms *wén*, then one is [crude like] a country bumpkin. If *wén* overwhelms raw substance, then one is [like] a scribe [= rigid, pedantic]. Only if *wén* and raw substance are harmoniously balanced, then one is a gentleman (*jūnzǐ* 君子). 子曰：「質勝文則野，文勝質則史，文質彬彬，然後君子。」²⁰⁰

In this passage the relative merits of ‘external refinement’ (*wén*) and ‘(original/innate) substance’ (*zhì* 質) are contrasted. The ideal gentleman (*jūnzǐ* 君子) should maintain a healthy balance of both properties. Interestingly, too much ‘external refinement’ (*wén*) leads one to become as rigid as a historical scribe *shǐ* 史, who simply records events in a terse annalistic fashion without imparting any moral wisdom. Although the use of *shǐ* 史 to describe the *wén* of various historical records in *M4B21* does not seem to have the same negative connotations as in *Lúnyǔ* 6.18, it nevertheless still seems to be used to refer to the style of a historical scribe.

The occurrence of *wén* in *M4A27* constitutes the closest candidate in the *Mèngzǐ* to a metacultural use of the term:

Mèngzǐ said, ‘The content of Goodness is the serving of one’s parents. The content of dutifulness is obedience to one’s elder brothers. The content of wisdom is to understand these two and to hold fast to them. The content of the rites is to regulate and to *wén* these two.’ 孟子曰：「仁之實，事親是也。義之實，從兄是也。智之實，知斯二者弗去是也。禮之實，節文斯二者是也。」²⁰¹

Here, as in *Lúnyǔ* 1.6, serving one’s parents (*shì qīn* 事親), or filial devotion (*xiào* 孝), as well as serving (*cóng xiōng* 從兄), or respecting elder brothers (*tì* 悌), are considered to be the foundation of moral education, onto which one can add *wén* as further ornamentation if one has

²⁰⁰ *Lúnyǔ* 6.18, tr. adapted from Slingerland (2003a:59)).

²⁰¹ *M4A27*, tr. adapted from Lau (1970:127). Lau (1970) translates 禮之實，節文斯二者是也 as “the content of the rites is the regulation and adornment of them.” Hinton (1998b) translates the same passage “the substance of Ritual is to shape and embellish these two things.”

the resources.²⁰² The *Mèngzǐ*'s use of *wén* in this passage is perhaps best compared to a similar use of the term in *Lúnyǔ* 14.11, discussed in chapter 2, which refers to Kǒngzǐ' process of 'refining' (*wén* 文) Yán Huí's mettle through rites and music (*lǐ yuè* 禮樂).²⁰³ The statement that the rites (*lǐ* 禮) serve to 'restrain' (*jié* 節) and 'pattern' (*wén*) behavior matches many similar statements in *Lúnyǔ* 6.27, 12.14, and 9.11.

At first glance the definition of the content (*shí* 實) of the rites as *wén* in *M4A27* may seem somewhat surprising. Normally, *wén* refers to a decorative pattern applied to an already functionally complete entity. Hence the apparent clash between *wén* 'decoration' and *shí* 'fullness, content, fruit.' However, in *M4A27*, *shí* and *wén* do not appear in to be in contrast. Rather, *shí* seems to be used more in the sense of 'true content' or 'true meaning.' This is also how *shí* is used in pre-Qín language philosophy to denote the meaning of a term (*míng* 名).²⁰⁴

Note that *wén* is used as a transitive verb in both *Lúnyǔ* 14.11 and in *M4A27*. That is, unlike the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, which both contain clear instances of *wén* being used as a noun referring to a metacultural concept in the narrow definition discussed in chapter 1, the *Mèngzǐ* does not. The only candidate for a metacultural use of *wén* is in this passage from *M4A27*, where it is used metaphorically as a verb referring to the process of 'decorating' or 'refining' personal relationships of filial piety and respect for elder brothers.

²⁰² See *Lúnyǔ* 1.6: The Master said, "A young person should be filial when at home and respectful of his elders when in public. Conscientious and trustworthy, he should display a general care for the masses but feel a particular affection for those who are Good (*ren*). If he has any strength left over after manifesting these virtues in practice, let him devote it to study *wén*. 子曰：弟子入則孝，出則悌，謹而信，汎愛眾，而親仁，行有餘力，則以學文。" (*Lúnyǔ* 1.6, tr. adapted from Slingerland (2003a:3)).

²⁰³ See *Lúnyǔ* 14.11: Zǐlù asked about the complete person. The Master said, "If a person who has Zāng Wǔzhòng's wisdom, Gōngchuò's lack of desire, Zhuāngzǐ of Biàn's courage, Rǎn Qiú's [command of the] arts, is 'polished' (*wén* 文) through rites and music, then he can be considered a complete person. 子路問成人。子曰：「若臧武仲之知，公綽之不欲，卞莊子之勇，冉求之藝，文之以禮樂，亦可以為成人矣。」 (*Lúnyǔ* 14.11, tr. adapted from Slingerland 2003a:158)

²⁰⁴ See for example, the "Knowledge Travels North" (*Zhī Běi Yóu* 知北遊) chapter in the *Zhuāngzǐ*: "different name but same meaning, their referents are one and the same" 異名同實，其指一也 (*Zhuāngzǐ*, "Knowledge Travels North," Guō Qīngfán 郭慶藩 (2008:750)).

In sum, while the *Mèngzǐ* does contain uses of *wén* in other meanings, metacultural concepts of *wén* are not explicitly mentioned as a component of its moral philosophy. That is, the metaphorical uses *wén* in the *Mèngzǐ* are simply a reflection of general pre-Qín linguistic usage patterns and do not appear to be part of a specialized vocabulary of moral philosophy. In this respect, the *Mèngzǐ* differs sharply from the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, which both use metacultural *wén* as a key term in their theories of moral education.

How can we explain this difference? The *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* both emphasize the role of the teachers (and sages) in fashioning or molding people into decent human beings by teaching them to behave according to the ideal norms of behavior established by the sage-kings. Human beings are believed to be born without innate knowledge of proper social norms. Hence their need to emulate the external models of behavior embodied in the Zhōu tradition. If not, they will end up as ‘birds and beasts’ (*qín shòu*).²⁰⁵ Slingerland’s (2003) contribution consists of showing that this shared assumption of the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* (that human nature is a moral ‘blank slate’) is reflected in the fact that both works tend to use craft metaphors to describe the process of edification.

The jade carving metaphors for moral edification found in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* imply that the raw material or input, i.e. human nature, is devoid of an innate potential to develop moral values and correct behavior on its own. In the same way that a raw piece of jade needs to be worked on by an expert jade carver in order to transform it into a beautifully decorated vessel, so does also human nature need to receive knowledge of normative values from the outside. The teacher is thus like the jade carver; he applies patterns of morality onto his students. Similar externalist metaphors for moral teaching are taken from pottery and carpentry. Like raw jade, a

²⁰⁵ See Fiskesjö (2012).

clod of clay and a plank of wood also need external effort in order to become useful utensils, chariots or houses.

In contrast to the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, the dominant metaphor for moral edification in the *Mèngzǐ* is taken from agriculture. As Slingerland (2003b) convincingly argues, this choice is far from arbitrary. Unlike the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, the *Mèngzǐ* assumes that human beings are born with the innate potential to develop knowledge of normative values on their own. Just as humans are born with four limbs, the *Mèngzǐ* assumes that they are also born with four ‘sprouts’ (*duān* 端)²⁰⁶ of virtue which have the innate potential to grow and flourish, if they are tended to in the appropriate way.²⁰⁷ In other words, human beings are more like seeds or plants than raw jade, clay, or dead wood. Thus, in *M6A:1*, young men are explicitly compared to a crop of barley.

Mèngzǐ said, ‘In good years the young men are mostly lazy, while in bad years they are mostly violent. Heaven has not sent down men whose endowment differs so greatly. The difference is due to what ensnares their hearts. Take the barley for example. Sow the seeds and cover them with soil. The place is the same and the time of sowing is also the same. The plants shoot up and by the summer solstice they all ripen. If there is any unevenness, it is because the soil varies in richness and there is no uniformity in the fall of rain and dew and the amount of human effort devoted to tending it.’ 孟子曰：「富歲，子弟多賴；凶歲，子弟多暴。非天之降才爾殊也，其所以陷溺其心者然也。今夫粳麥，播種而耰之，其地同，樹之時又同，淳然而生，至於日至之時，皆熟矣。雖有不同，則地有肥磽，雨露之養、人事之不齊也。」²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ The basic meaning of *duān* 端 is ‘tip.’ The word *duān* can be used to refer to the ‘tips’ or ‘sprouts’ of plants as they emerge from the ground. In *Mèngzǐ* 2A:6 the word is used metaphorically to refer to the innate ‘sprouts’ of human virtues.

²⁰⁷ See *Mèngzǐ* 2A:6: The heart of compassion is the sprout of Goodness; the heart of shame is the sprout of rightness; the heart of deference is the sprout of ritual propriety; and the heart of right and wrong is the sprout of wisdom. People have these four sprouts in the same way as they have four limbs. Possessing these four sprouts, one who declares himself incapable is a robber [*zei* 賊] of himself.” 惻隱之心，仁之端也；羞惡之心，義之端也；辭讓之心，禮之端也；是非之心，智之端也。人之有是四端也，猶其有四體也。有是四端而自謂不能者，自賊者也。（*Mèngzǐ* 2A:6; tr. adapted from Slingerland 2003b:141）

²⁰⁸ *Mèngzǐ* 6A:7; tr. adapted from Lau (1970:164). For another example of what Slingerland calls the SELF AS DOMESTICATED PLANT metaphor (see Slingerland (2003b:157)) in the *Mèngzǐ* see *Mèngzǐ* 6A:19: Mencius said, ‘As for the five [types of] grain, they are the best of the plant seeds. However, if they are not ripe, then they are not [even] as good as weeds. With Goodness the point, too, lies in seeing to its being ripe.’ 孟子曰：「五穀者，種之美者也。苟為不熟，不如蕘稗。夫仁亦在乎熟之而已矣。（*Mèngzǐ* 6A:1; tr. adapted from Lau 1970:169）

Although the teacher is still necessary, his role is not considered to be as important as in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. Barley will still grow without a caring farmer weeding, fertilizing and watering his fields. In contrast, stones and clay are completely reliant on external effort. Just as a farmer is needed to achieve a bountiful crop, so is also the teacher important in ensuring the best outcome of the edification process. Like a diligent farmer, he provides the proper environment in which the student can develop his innate moral potential. In sum, “[d]omesticated plants thus represent for Mencius the perfect marriage of human effort with natural tendencies, and thereby serve as the ideal metaphor for the ‘cultivation’ of wu-wei moral tendencies.” (Slingerland 2003b:15)²⁰⁹

Since the metacultural concept of *wén* retains the basic connotation of being an ‘externally applied decorative pattern,’ it fits well into the craft metaphors which abound in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. Slingerland’s analysis of the use of metaphors in early Chinese texts thus helps us understand why metacultural *wén* plays a central role in these works. In the words of Slingerland (2003b),

The primary metaphor for self-cultivation in the *Analects* is that of adornment. The SELF-CULTIVATION AS ADORNMENT schema informs the metaphor pair of “native stuff” (*zhi* 質) and “cultural refinement” (*wen* 文; lit. lines, strokes), as well as the most common term for self-cultivation itself, *xiu* 修 – literally, decorating or adorning a surface. This primary metaphor is often supplemented by and mixed with a related metaphor, SELF-CULTIVATION AS CRAFT,

²⁰⁹ For the most explicit self-cultivation as agriculture metaphor in the *Mèngzǐ*, see *Mèngzǐ* 2A:2:

You must work at it, but you must not [forcefully] make it upright. Don’t [let your] heart/mind forget about it. But do not [forcefully] help it grow either. Be not like the man from Song. In Song there was a man who – worried because his seedlings were not growing-decided to pull on them. Without any idea of what he had done he returned home and announced to his family. ‘I am terribly worn out today-I’ve been out helping the seedlings to grow!’ His sons rushed out to the fields to take a look and saw that all the seedlings had shriveled and died. Rare are those in the world who can refrain from trying to help their seedlings to grow. Then there are those who think that there is nothing they can do to help and therefore abandon all effort entirely. They are the people who fail to weed their seedlings. Those who try to help along the growth are the ‘seedling-pullers.’ Not only do their efforts fail to help, they actually do positive harm. 必有事焉而勿正，心勿忘，勿助長也。無若宋人然。宋人有閔其苗之不長而揠之者，芒芒然歸，謂其人曰：『今日病矣，予助苗長矣。』其子趨而往視之，苗則槁矣。天下之不助苗長者寡矣。以為無益而舍之者，不耘苗者也。助之長者，揠苗者也，非徒無益，而又害之。(Mèngzǐ 2A:2; tr. adapted from Lau (1970) and Slingerland (2003b:156))

where the process of education is understood as an actual reshaping of the “stuff” of the Self rather than the adornment of its surface.²¹⁰

Slingerland’s analysis also explains the prevalence of metacultural *wén* in the *Xúnzǐ*. “Xunzi explicitly celebrates the artificial, ‘decorative’ (*shi* 飾) metaphors for Confucian self-cultivation, because in his view the forms of culture were created by the sages in the same way that a potter creates vessels out of clay – fashioning something entirely artificial out of undifferentiated raw material, rather than realizing some tendency or pattern rooted in their inborn nature (KIII:152/W437)” (Slingerland 2003b:237)²¹¹

Although Slingerland’s metaphor analysis successfully explains the close affinity between the externalist theory of human nature in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* in contrast to the internalist theory of *Mèngzǐ*, he does not mention the fact that metacultural *wén* never occurs in the *Mèngzǐ*. Instead he claims that “Mencius portray[s] the achievement of Confucian **culture** (*wén*) [...] as the proper and unforced culmination of human nature.” (Slingerland 2003b:15) Since, as shown above, the *Mèngzǐ* does not explicitly discuss metacultural *wén*, this claim seems incorrect. While it is true that the *Mèngzǐ* does follow the *Lúnyǔ* in recommending studying and following the rites (*lǐ*) as the best path to a moral life, and while the rites (*lǐ*) are a central part of the Zhōu elite tradition which serves as the curriculum in the moral education proposed in the

²¹⁰ Slingerland (2003b:50).

²¹¹ For an explicit reference to *wén* as the ‘external decoration’ of the ‘raw material’ of ‘human nature’ in the *Xúnzǐ*, see *Xúnzǐ* “*Lǐ Lùn* 禮論”:

Therefore I say: nature is the root and beginning, the raw material and original simplicity. Conscious activity is the refinement and patterned order, the flourishing and culmination. If there were no nature, there would be nothing for conscious activity to apply itself to; if there were no conscious activity, nature would have no way to beautify itself. Only after nature and conscious activity have been properly matched are the renown of the sage and the work of unifying the world brought to completion.” 故曰：性者，本始材朴也；偽者，文理隆盛也。無性則偽之無所加，無偽則性不能自美。性偽合，然後聖人之名，一天下之功於是就也。(Xúnzǐ 19.6, tr. adapted from Slingerland (2003b:234-5) who in turn is inspired by Knoblock (1988-1994:III, 66))

An explicit simile for learning and edification can be found in *Xúnzǐ* 27.84 (discussed in more detail in chapter 2):

Polite (*wén*) studies is to a person what polishing and grinding are to jade. An ode says, As if cut, as if polished; as if carved, as if ground. This refers to studying and inquiring. 人之於文學也，猶玉之於琢磨也。《詩》曰：「如切如磋，如琢如磨。」謂學問也。(Xúnzǐ 27.84, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:508))

Lúnyǔ, the *Mèngzǐ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, it still seems unfounded to claim that the *Mèngzǐ* takes the achievement of “Confucian culture (*wén*) as the [...] culmination of human nature.”²¹²

What seems to be behind this claim about the role of *wén* in the *Mèngzǐ* is the problematic assumption of semantic equivalence between the modern English concept of ‘culture’ and the pre-Qín notion of metacultural *wén*. The *Mèngzǐ* certainly does not recommend the whole-scale rejection of the Zhōu tradition found in the *Hánfēizǐ* and the *Mòzǐ*.²¹³ In the *Mèngzǐ*, anyone who does not live by the Zhōu rites (*Zhōu lǐ*) lives like a bird or a beast (*qín shòu*).²¹⁴ *Mèngzǐ* also recommends studying the *Shī* 詩 and the *Shū* 書 as well as engaging in music (*yuè*) and elaborate funeral practices. As shown in section 3.2 and 3.3., all these practices were fiercely criticized in the *Mòzǐ* and *Hánfēizǐ*. In this sense, the *Mèngzǐ* certainly sides with the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* in extolling the importance of the Zhōu elite tradition. However, the *Mèngzǐ*’s endorsement of the ‘culture’ of the Zhōu elite tradition should not automatically be taken as an endorsement of the metacultural concept of *wén* as defined in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. Both the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* explicitly discuss metacultural *wén*, which is a key concept in their theories of moral edification. In contrast, the *Mèngzǐ* does not contain any explicit discussion of metacultural *wén*, which is not mentioned in any of the passages that describe the edification process.

Using the modern English sense of the word, it certainly makes sense to say that the *Mèngzǐ* endorses Zhōu ‘culture’ as an essential part of moral education. Rites, music, and other

²¹² “In place of Laozi’s inert block of ‘uncarved wood,’ Mencius’s primary metaphor is the dynamic ‘sprout,’ which has a natural direction and motive force of its own. *In this way Mencius can portray the achievement of Confucian culture (wen)*—rejected outright by the Laozian primitivists as unnatural—as *the proper and unforced culmination of human nature*. In other words, we can get the cultural ‘grain’ without having to ‘tug on the sprouts,’ to borrow a metaphor from Mencius 2:A:2. [...] Domesticated plants thus represent for Mencius the perfect marriage of human effort with natural tendencies, and thereby serve as the ideal metaphor for the ‘cultivation’ of wu-wei moral tendencies.” (Slingerland 2003b:15, italics added)

²¹³ As well as in the *Lǎozǐ* and in parts of the *Zhuāngzǐ*.

²¹⁴ See Pines (2005).

elite practices were central to Mèngzǐ's life, and to the ideal life of a *jūnzǐ* described in the *Mèngzǐ*. However, this does not mean that he considered metacultural *wén* to be central to his moral philosophy. As argued above, and as argued by Slingerland (2003b), the term *wén* retained connotations of its more basic meanings of 'externally applied decorative pattern' even when used in its abstract sense to refer to metacultural concepts. Hence, it matched perfectly with the craft metaphors for moral edification found in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. However, since the Mèngzǐan theory of moral edification is formulated mainly in terms of agricultural metaphors, these connotations of the term *wén* would clash with the *Mèngzǐ*'s internalist assumptions about human nature.

The incompatibility of metacultural *wén* and Mèngzǐan theories of moral edification is revealed by the following passage from Mèngzǐ's dialogue with Gàozi, who endorses a more externalist approach to moral education.

Gàozi said, "Human nature is like the [wood of the] *qǐ* willow. Duty is like cups and bowls. To make Goodness and duty (*rén yì* 仁義) out of human nature is like making cups and bowls out of the [wood of the] *qǐ* willow." Mèngzǐ replied, "Can you follow the nature of the *qǐ* willow when making your cups and bowls? Or is it in fact the case that you will have to mutilate the *qǐ* willow when making it into cups and bowls? If you have to mutilate the *qǐ* willow when making it into cups and bowls, must you then also mutilate people when making Good and dutiful?" 告子曰：「性猶杞柳也；義猶桮棬也。以人性為仁義，猶以杞柳為桮棬。」孟子曰：「子能順杞柳之性而以為桮棬乎？將戕賊杞柳而後以為桮棬也？如將戕賊杞柳而以為桮棬，則亦將戕賊人以為仁義與？」²¹⁵

²¹⁵ *Mèngzǐ* 6A:1; tr. adapted from Slingerland (2003b:150). Slingerland explains this passage as follows: "Rather than the gentle farmer working along with the natural tendencies of plants, then, Xunzi's sage is a craftsman who utilizes external tools and applies outside force in order to shape a recalcitrant material. Whereas Mencius compares the process of self-cultivation to sprouts growing or water flowing downhill, Xunzi evokes the images of warped wood being steamed straight, cloth being artificially dyed, bows being bent into shape, or dull metal being sharpened. The resemblance between these images and the image evoked by Gaozi in Mencius 6A1 of making morality out of human nature like carving cups and bowls out of a willow tree is not at all accidental, for Xunzi shares with Gaozi the belief that moral guidance must be imposed from the outside. Since human nature is inherently crooked, external forces must be brought to bear upon it before it can be made straight." (Slingerland 2003b:234)

In Slingerland's (2003b) analysis, Gàozi's woodcarving metaphor indicates that he assumes normative values must have a source external to human nature. Devoid of normative values, unedified individuals must rely on a teacher to 'carve them into shape.' In contrast, for Mèngzǐ, woodcarving results in the destruction of the wood's originally innate potential. In other words, since the concept metacultural *wén* retains the connotations of being an 'externally applied decorative pattern,' it is incompatible with the Mèngzǐ's assumptions about human nature and moral edification. While his moral edification includes Zhōu 'culture' as a key component²¹⁶, Mèngzǐ cannot explicitly endorse the concept of metacultural *wén* without contradicting these assumptions. Thus while Slingerland's metaphor analysis of moral edification in the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Xúnzǐ* and the *Mèngzǐ* represents a significant contribution to our understanding of the philosophical affinities between three pre-Qín texts, the conflation of the pre-Qín concept of metacultural *wén* and the modern English concept of 'culture' obscures important differences in the attitudes to metacultural *wén* in these works. While all three endorse Zhōu 'culture,' only the *Xúnzǐ* and the *Lúnyǔ* are compatible with the externalist connotations of metacultural *wén*.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the attitudes toward metacultural *wén* in the *Hánfēizǐ*, the *Mòzǐ*, and the *Mèngzǐ*. In contrast to the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, discussed in chapter 2, these three works either reject metacultural *wén* outright or remain silent on its significance. Table 1 below briefly summarizes the different takes on *wén* in these five Zhànguó period works.

²¹⁶ As correctly observed by Slingerland (2003), Zhōu 'culture' plays an important role in the agriculture metaphors for moral edification in the *Mèngzǐ*. Just as plants need to be weeded and watered by the diligent farmer, so do also the 'sprouts' of virtue need to be tended to by a teacher or mentor. And the recommended curriculum would include various aspects of Zhōu 'culture,' i.e. the rites, music, study of the *Shī* and the *Shū*, etc., which are also promoted in the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. However, while the *Mèngzǐ* does endorse Zhōu 'culture,' it cannot adopt *wén* as a key concept, since it clashes with its internalist assumptions about human nature.

Table 1. Disputers of metacultural *wén*.

	<i>Lúnyǔ</i>	<i>Xúnzǐ</i>	<i>Mèngzǐ</i>	<i>Mòzǐ</i>	<i>Hánfēizǐ</i> ²¹⁷
(i) <i>Wén</i> is described positively	+	+	-	-	-
(ii) Material expression of <i>wén</i> is wasteful	-	-	-	+	+
(iii) <i>Wén</i> subverts <i>fǎ</i>	-	-	-	-	+
(iv) <i>Wén</i> is explicitly discussed	+	+	-	-	+
(v) Embraces Zhōu ‘culture’	+	+	+	-	-

Each of the five rows in table 1 compares the five Zhànguó period works with respect to one parameter. First, in row (i) we see that only the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* explicitly describe *wén* in positive terms. In both works, as discussed in chapter 2, the ideal ruler cultivates a *wén* demeanor and appearance in order make people obey him. The *wén* of a person is his moral charisma, which stems from his embodying the ‘ideal patterns of behavior’ (*wén*) of the Zhōu elite tradition.

Second, as indicated in row (ii), I have shown that both the *Mòzǐ* and the *Hánfēizǐ* reject metacultural *wén* on philosophical grounds. In these two works, the material expression of *wén* in the form of costly embroidered garments (with emblems [*wén*] and insignia), decorated (*wén*) chariots, musical performances and lavish funeral ceremonies are all viewed as a waste of resources.

Third, row (iii) distinguishes the *Hánfēizǐ* from the other four works by its adherence to a theory of promulgated models (*fǎ*) which is incompatible with metacultural *wén*. That is, although the *Mòzǐ* also rejects metacultural *wén*, it does so because it is incompatible with its utilitarian philosophy of maximizing ‘benefit’ (*lì* 利) rather than due to any clash between metacultural *wén* and promulgated models (*fǎ*).

²¹⁷ As mentioned above, the *Shāngjūnshū*, which I have not discussed here, is very similar to the *Hánfēizǐ* in its criticism of metacultural *wén*.

In row (iv) I have indicated which works explicitly mention metacultural *wén*. Based on the corpus of pre-Qín texts described in section 1.7, I argue that the concept of metacultural *wén* was first lexicalized in the *Zuǒzhuan*, the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, and is discussed explicitly in these works. While the theories of statecraft in the *Mòzǐ* and the *Hánfēizǐ* are incompatible with metacultural *wén*, only the *Hánfēizǐ* explicitly names it as a pernicious influence.

The theory of lexicalization, which is part of the framework of lexicalized metaculture proposed in chapter 1, may help us explain this difference between *Mòzǐ* and the *Hánfēizǐ*. The first occurrences of lexicalized metacultural *wén* appear in texts whose oldest material date back to the 5th century BCE. In the 5th century and early 4th century BCE, metacultural *wén* was primarily part of an esoteric vocabulary of people like Kǒngzǐ and like-minded conservative thinkers who embraced the values of the Zhōu elite tradition. In other words, metacultural *wén* had yet to become part of the collectively shared vocabulary of the pan-Zhōu literate elite of thinkers and masters of statecraft. Hence, the composers of the *Mòzǐ* did not yet use the word *wén* to reject the Rú practices which the Rú themselves had begun referring to as *wén*. In contrast, by the late Zhànguó period, the composers of the *Xúnzǐ* explicitly criticized Mòzǐ for his lack of understanding of metacultural *wén*. Similarly, the composers of the *Hánfēizǐ* formulated their rejection of the Rú's views as an explicit denigration of metacultural *wén*. This shows that by the 3rd century BCE, metacultural *wén* had become fully integrated into the vocabulary shared by both proponents and opponents of a term that had originally been coined in works adhering to Rú values.²¹⁸

Finally, perhaps the most important contribution of the framework of lexicalized metaculture is that it allows us to discover the surprising lack of discussion of metacultural *wén*

²¹⁸ That the *Hánfēizǐ* explicitly discusses metacultural *wén* may also in part be due to the fact that he was a student of *Xúnzǐ*, who as we have seen in the analysis of passages from the eponymous work attributed to him, developed the most elaborate theory of *wén* in the pre-Qín corpus.

in the *Mèngzǐ*. As described in chapter 2, the term *wén* has a bewildering array of meanings in pre-Qín texts. As a consequence, earlier discussions of the philosophies of the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Xúnzǐ* and the *Mèngzǐ* have overlooked how strikingly the *Mèngzǐ* differs from the other two works with respect to metacultural *wén*. That is, while the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* explicitly discuss metacultural *wén* as a key concept, the *Mèngzǐ* does not. Adopting externalist view of human nature, the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* conceptualize the edification process using crafts metaphors. In these texts, moral education is, metaphorically speaking, the process of ‘polishing’ (*wén*) one’s raw innate potential through ‘polite studies’ (*wénxué*).²¹⁹ In contrast, the internalist view of human nature found in the *Mèngzǐ* conceptualizes the ideal edification process in terms of agriculture metaphors. Human nature is like a domesticated plant which has the innate potential to grow on its own, but which will only reach its full potential if tended to by a caring farmer.

Although I adopt his analysis of human nature in the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Xúnzǐ* and the *Mèngzǐ*, I disagree with Slingerland’s assessment that the *Mèngzǐ* portrays “the achievement of Confucian culture (*wen*) [...] as the proper and unforced culmination of human nature.” (Slingerland 2003b:15) The *Mèngzǐ* is not against ‘culture’ in the Modern English sense of the term, as indicated in row (v) in table 1 above. Like the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, the *Mèngzǐ* endorses the practices and values of the Zhōu elite tradition. However, this does not mean that the *Mèngzǐ* has the same take on the pre-Qín concept of metacultural *wén* and its role in the ideal edification process as the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. The *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* view the process of edification as akin to the process of carving patterns (*wén*) onto raw pieces of jade. That is, the teacher and the sages carve and polish (*wén*) people until the ‘ideal patterns of behavior’ (i.e. metacultural *wén*) are imprinted on them. In the *Mèngzǐ*, the ideal models of behavior exemplified by the former

²¹⁹ Notice the etymological connection between *polish* and *polite*, which both derive from the Latin verb *polire* ‘to polish,’ see Onions (1985:693).

kings and sages are also important. But they function more as guidelines for teachers rather than patterns (*wén*) which must be rigidly applied to human nature. Translating *wén* as ‘culture’ is thus problematic since it obscures the different takes on metacultural *wén* found in these three texts. The issue of how to translate metacultural *wén* has important consequences for our understanding of pre-Qín thought, and it will be the topic of chapter 5.

Chapter 4 Contextualizing the Lexicalization of Metaculture

4.1 Introduction

This chapter situates the emergence of metacultural uses of the term *wén* within the context of the socio-political, economic and intellectual changes that took place in the Zhōu realm during the five centuries of the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó periods. Many of these changes have been discussed in the literature. In section 4.2 I will briefly summarize the key changes that have been proposed in studies of this period. Sections 4.3-7 will focus on changes which bear more directly on the emergence of a heightened level of cultural awareness and reflexivity that eventually crystallized into lexicalized metacultural concepts such as *wén*.

This chapter illustrates how the theoretical framework of lexicalized metaculture allows us to link lexical changes in the uses and meaning of metacultural *wén* to the larger historical context. By doing so, we are able to use terminological changes to formulate hypotheses about epistemic changes in the Zhou elite's perception of early Zhou traditions and mores. In other words, as argued in chapter 1, the framework of lexicalized metaculture goes beyond existing theories of metaculture (Urban (2001), Tomlinson (2009), etc.) by serving as interface between larger socio-political changes and the accompanying changes in the collectively shared set of metacultural concepts.

The main purpose of this chapter is not to produce new research on the socio-political changes that happened over the course of the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó periods, but rather to provide a selective summary of some of the changes proposed in the literature which contributed to forming the context in which the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* took place. All of the changes discussed in the following were proposed independently of the present study of lexicalized metaculture. Linking the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* to these changes may therefore help mitigate the potential problems of circularity inherent in arguing that the absence of metacultural *wén* in the pre- Zhànguó corpus shows that the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* had not yet occurred. That is, by arguing that the lexicalization of *wén* in the Zhànguó period depended on the socio-political changes discussed here, I avoid relying exclusively on the absence of evidence of metacultural *wén* in the relatively small and biased corpus of pre- Zhànguó text. In sum this chapter illustrates how the theory of lexicalized metaculture allows us to form hypothesis about the relationship between (i) changes in the lexicon (i.e. the lexicalization of metacultural *wén*), (ii) changes in the nature and composition of the community of individuals communicating in this shared lexicon, and (iii) the larger socio-political changes which affect this linguistic community.

4.2 General socio-political changes from the Western Zhōu to the Zhànguó period

From the 8th to the 3rd century BCE, the socio-political structure of the Zhōu realm changed dramatically. Slowly but steadily the Western Zhōu lineage-based social hierarchy, which centered on the royal family and a mostly hereditary system of government officials, was replaced with a multi-state political system of increasingly ruler-centered states which were run by salaried government officials recruited and promoted based on a mixture of family

background *and/or* personal qualifications.²²⁰ A number of factors contributed to these unprecedented changes.²²¹

The breakdown of lineage-based social hierarchies began during the mid-Western Zhōu (1045-771 BCE) period with the gradual erosion of the Zhōu ruler's political power. Before the conquest of the Shāng in 1045 BCE, the Zhōu kings had ruled over a relatively small area. In order to manage their vastly increased post-conquest domain, the early Western Zhōu rulers established a number of garrison states that were placed under the hereditary rule of Zhōu princes and noble families.²²² Over time these states grew in strength and size and became increasingly independent from the Zhōu center. The power vacuum created after the fall of the Western Zhōu (with the military defeat of King Yōu in 771 BCE) eventually gave rise to a multistate system in which the leaders of the powerful states of the Zhōu realm vied for the role of lord-protector (*bà 霸*).²²³ Although nominally the protector of the Zhōu court, the lord-protector was the *de facto* political and military leader of the multi-state realm. Thus, while the Zhōu was still in principle the highest political authority, his position had become largely ceremonial, while real political power was held by the leaders of the strongest states in the multi-state system.²²⁴

The old government system of hereditary office received a further blow during the Chūnqiū period (771-481 BCE) when the ministerial clans of the various states began to usurp

²²⁰ Brooks (2003:80) dates the main developments to the 4th century BCE: “The great event of the 04c is a single change with three major aspects: (1) the new bureaucratic state, which had the administrative capability to support (2) the new mass infantry army, which in turn involved (3) incorporating the common people into the state. The evidence for these changes points to the 04c century as their culminating point. [21] I first review evidence for that 04th century dating [of the *Zuǒzhuan*].” According to Brooks (2003), “[a]n exclusive reliance on the historically retrospective *Zuǒzhuan* has created the impression (see for example Hsu [(1999:547, 554)] that these changes took place centuries earlier.”

²²¹ For useful discussion of some of the archaeological evidence for the changes that took place between the Western Zhōu and the Zhànguó period, see Falkenhausen (2006).

²²² The dates for the Western Zhōu and the conquest of the Shāng are from Shaughnessy (1999).

²²³ The term *bà 霸* is also sometimes translated as ‘hegemon.’

²²⁴ This paragraph is based on Hsu (1999), Yáng Kuān 楊寬 (2003) and Yáng Kuān 楊寬 (1999).

the political authority and ritual prerogatives of the local rulers. At the time of Kǒngzǐ (551-479 BCE) the ruler of the state of Lǚ had been reduced to a largely ceremonial role, while the real power lay with the head of the Jì family, whose official position was that of minister.²²⁵

The erosion of the old Western Zhōu kinship-based hereditary rule by members of the royal family and high nobility was accompanied by the disintegration of the ritual system on which it was built. In the old system, different ranks in the hierarchy had different ritual prerogatives and duties determining what people of different standing could and should do. In *Lúnyǔ* 3.1, Kǒngzǐ criticizes the Jì family for overstepping ritual decorum by employing more rows of dancers than are allowed for ministerial families: “Eight rows [of performers] are dancing in [their] courtyard. If this can be tolerated, then what cannot be tolerated?”²²⁶ According to *Zuǒzhuàn* Yǐn 5.7, the number of rows of feather-decorated dancers was determined by rank: “The Son of Heaven used eight, the lords of the various states used six, ministerial families used four, and the *shì* 士 two.”²²⁷ For Kǒngzǐ, the Jì family’s use of eight rows of dancers represented a serious threat to the ritual fabric that was responsible for social order and cohesion.²²⁸ Thus, at the eve of the Zhànguó period, the early Zhōu ritualized system

²²⁵ See Yáng Kuān 楊寬 (2003:165-166).

²²⁶ *Lúnyǔ* 3.1, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:136).

²²⁷ *Zuǒzhuàn* Yǐn 5.7: “The duke asked Zhongzhong about the number of feather[-decorated dance]s. The replay was: ‘The Son of Heaven uses eight, the rulers of the states use six, the great officers four, the *shì* two. [...]’ Thereupon [the Duke] for the first time used [only] six [rows] of feather-decorated dancers.” 公問羽數於眾仲。對曰：「天子用八，諸侯用六，大夫四，士二。[...]」公從之。於是初獻六羽，始用六佾也。(tr. adapted from Legge 1960:19).

²²⁸ See also the discussion of the commentarial discussion *Lúnyǔ* 3.1. summarized in Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:136-140). From a modern perspective, criticizing a minister’s use of too many rows of dancers in ritual performances may seem far removed from direct criticism of transgressions of government office. However, in Kǒngzǐ’s time ritual prerogatives were in fact one of the most conspicuous manifestations of political power. Criticizing someone for usurping ritual prerogatives of his superiors is thus a very direct way of criticizing this person for subverting the political order and fabric of society.

of inherited rank and office-holding was beginning to be replaced by a new social order in which inherited social rank was less important than it had been during the Western Zhōu.²²⁹

During the Western Zhōu hereditary officeholders had typically been given land in return for their services. Due to population growth triggered by technological advances in agriculture and metallurgy, the administrations of the various states of the Zhōu realm began to need more skilled administrators than could be furnished by hereditary office alone.²³⁰ As a consequence, they began to recruit talented individuals (of various backgrounds) as officials. Rather than being given land, these non-hereditary officials were instead paid salaries.

During this period of political restructuring, the economic system of the Zhōu realm also underwent a profound transformation from an economy based on manorial management to a more currency-based market economy.²³¹ Changes contributing to this development include the introduction of peasant land tenure, direct taxation and expansion of currency systems.²³² Improvements in road infrastructure and riverine transport also contributed to inter-state trade

²²⁹ For a recent re-evaluation of the issue of hereditary office holding and promotion based on merit in the early Zhōu, see Li Feng (2008:190-234). Li Feng (2008: 191-2) also contains the following succinct summary of traditional views on the pervasiveness of the practice of recruiting officials based on heredity:

Traditional historical records describe the Western Zhōu dynasty as a period when aristocratic officials were placed in government offices by the right of their birth, in contrast to the meritocracy that did not appear in China until the Warring States period. With minor modifications, this view is still strongly held by many scholars in China [...]. [“For instance, Yang Kuan emphasized that main offices in the Western Zhōu government were hereditarily held, but, based on information from the inscriptions, that succession to office required royal sanction; see [Yáng Kuān 楊寬(1999:364-66)]. Chu Ren argued that hereditary succession was dominant, while qualification was considered only for low-ranking officials, see [Chu Ren (1985:86-87)]. Wang Yiliang suggested that hereditary offices were prominent, and appointments based on qualifications were only marginal and decorative; see Wang Yiliang (1989:90-96).” (Li 2008:191n2)] Western scholars, for instance, Herrlee Creel, favored a more flexible position, considering that hereditary service was practiced only partially in a short period of fifty years during the mid-Western Zhōu and then was abandoned in preference for selecting officials on the basis of merit.[“See Creel [(1970:396-400)].” (Li 2008:191n3)] On the other hand, Hsu and Linduff regarded hereditary succession to office as the normal pattern but considered that during the late phase of the mid-Western Zhōu flexibility began to appear, allowing selection appointments based on qualifications. [“See Hsu and Linduff (1988:249-51).” (Li 2008:192n4)]” (Li 2008:191-92)

For a traditional account of the transition from hereditary office to a system of more meritocratic promotion characterized by more ‘social mobility,’ see (Hsu 1965, esp. pp. 24-52).

²³⁰ Advances in metallurgy during this period include the ability to produce cast and wrought iron vessels and implements, see Hsu (1999:578-580).

²³¹ Yáng Kuān 楊寬 (1953), Hsu (1999:545), Gernet (1982), Gernet (1999), Lewis (1999).

²³² For more detailed summary of the literature on the emergence of currency economies in the pre-Qín period, see Yohei’s dissertation [Find exact reference].

and communication.²³³ Beyond contributing to an increased exchange of goods, these changes also facilitated movement of individuals and ideas between the different states of the Zhōu realm.²³⁴

Changes in the nature of warfare also spurred the creation of non-hereditary positions. In the Western Zhōu, warfare had largely been the domain of the hereditary nobility. Armies were relatively small and were composed mainly of high-status chariot-riding warriors accompanied by foot soldiers of lower ranks. Battles rarely lasted more than a few days and were usually geographically confined to well-defined battlefields. In contrast, the systems of mass conscription of peasants, which were established during the Zhànguó period, could mobilize armies which “may have numbered in the hundreds of thousands.”²³⁵ Wars could now last several years and were no longer geographically confined to battlefields. As wars developed into highly complicated strategic and logistic undertakings, a growing need for various kinds of military specialists developed. Thus, in the Zhànguó period, military treatises, some of which were attributed to masters of military strategy from earlier periods, began being composed.²³⁶ In order to ensure military success, military specialists and advisers began to be recruited based on their qualifications rather than on their kinship background and noble rank. Eventually, in the

²³³ According to Pines (2001:107), “the growing commercialization of the Zhànguó economy, galvanized inter-regional connections and increased regional interdependence, with economic ties transcending boundaries of individual states, contributing thereby to a sense of economic unity of All under Heaven.” For additional discussion of these developments, see also Yáng Kuān 楊寬 (2003) and Hsu (1965:116-126).

²³⁴ According to Pines (2002a:107), “the increasing migration of statesmen across state boundaries perpetuated cultural links between these states and increased their political interdependence. Almost all of the known Zhànguó thinkers routinely crossed boundaries in search of better appointment and many served more than one state.” See also Lewis (1999:632-634) for further discussion of these “servants of several masters.” See also Meyer (2012:233-234) who adopts Bal’s (2001) notion of “travelling concepts,” to describe “the pool of shared memory” of the “authors of philosophical texts,” who in the Zhànguó period overlapped with the groups of travelling “servants of several masters.”

²³⁵ Lewis (2007:32).

²³⁶ This include the *Sūnzǐ* 孫子, the *Sūn Bīn* 孫臏, the *Wúzi* 吳子, the *Wèi Liáozǐ* 尉繚子, the *Sīmǎ fǎ* 司馬法, and the *Tàigōng liù tāo* 太公六韜, see Lewis (Lewis 1999).

state of Qin, meritocratic systems of promotion were proposed and partially implemented towards the end of the Zhànguó period.²³⁷

The different states varied with respect to the extent to which they institutionalized these changes that undermined the hereditary privileges of the nobility. The process culminated in the reforms implemented by Shāng Yāng (390–338 BCE) in the state of Qin from 359 BCE onwards. Productive labor (e.g., farming and weaving) was rewarded by exemptions from taxes and corvée. Military rank was determined by achievements (e.g. enemy soldiers killed, successful battles, etc.) according to a twenty-rank system. One consequence of these changes was that the importance of lineage-ruled city-states, which had been the primary political unit in the pre-Zhànguó period, slowly faded. As observed by Lewis (2007:32),

Defeated city-states were absorbed by their conquerors, who redistributed the land to their own population in exchange for military service and taxes. [...] As city-states disappeared, the old city-based nobility lost its place in the state order, just as it lost its prominence in the army. In place of the nobility, the state was increasingly dominated by a single autocratic ruler, whose agents registered the peasants and mobilized them into state service and collected taxes to support the ruler's military ambitions. (Lewis 2007:32)²³⁸

In the Zhànguó period, the old political system institutionalized in the kinship system of patrilineal succession to hereditary office-holding, was thus under assault on several fronts.^{239 240}

²³⁷ Lewis (2007). For a comprehensive overview of the history of warfare in pre-Qín China, see Sawyer (2011).

²³⁸ See also Lewis (1990:54-60). For changes in state bureaucracy and military organization, see also Yates (1987), Yates (1988), Yates (1994), and Yates (1995).

²³⁹ These changes are described in Yang 楊 (2003); Hsu (1965), and Hsu (1999).

²⁴⁰ The controversies related to (i) the meaning of the term *shì* 士 'retainer-official,' and (ii) whether the five centuries of the Chūnqiú to Zhànguó periods involved a major rise in 'social mobility' do not bear directly on the study of lexicalized metaculture presented here. What is important here is that the Chūnqiú and Zhànguó periods did see the emergence of a group of individuals interested in composing and circulating ideas about statecraft and moral philosophy and that such a group did not seem to have existed to the same extent in earlier periods. Whether these groups coincide with the people referred to in pre-Qín texts as *shì* is not crucial to the argument. For insightful discussion of the term *shì* and its meanings, see Yú Yīngshí 余英時 (1987), Liu Zehua (2004) and Pines (2009:115-186).

Similarly, the debates on the degree of social mobility Chūnqiú and Zhànguó periods are also perpendicular to the issues discussed here. That is, whether the groups of individuals interested in composing and circulating ideas

Finally, Wang (2000) has argued that the changes in the socio-political system that took place during the five centuries preceding the Qin unification in 221 BCE were linked through a “reciprocal dialectic” to changes in cosmological theories.²⁴¹ The ruling clan of the Shāng (ca. 1700-1045 BCE) viewed themselves as inhabiting the world, referred to as the ‘central Shāng’ *zhōng shāng* 中商 or the ‘central land’ *zhōng tǔ* 中土. Surrounding this center were the four quarters (‘four sides’ *sì fāng* 四方 or ‘four lands’ *sì tǔ* 四土) inhabited by non-Shāng ‘others.’²⁴² Politically this cosmology contrasted the “centrality of a homogeneous ‘us’” with a heterogeneous group of ‘others.’²⁴³ Beyond the political dimension, the expression *sì fāng* also referred to the cardinal directions in ritual and cosmological terms. The *sì fāng* were associated with different ‘winds’ (*fēng* 風) which were mentioned in divination records about meteorological phenomena. Other inscriptions also mention the ‘sides’ (*fāng*) in connection with sacrifices to the cardinal directions.²⁴⁴ Being at the top of both the political and the religious hierarchies, the Shāng king served as the central spirit medium or shaman connecting the human and the spiritual realms. The *sì fāng* cosmology thus corroborates his political and religious authority by placing him at the center of humanity and the universe.

Wang’s (2000) central argument is that during the latter half of the first millennium BCE, the old *sì fāng* cosmology structured around a static center/periphery contrast was slowly replaced by a more dynamic cosmological system of five interactive phases (*wǔ xíng* 五行). This

about statecraft and moral philosophy came from humble or noble backgrounds is not important to the analysis of lexicalized metaculture. The main point is that such groups came into existence around the middle of the first millennium BCE. To be sure, there are cases where knowledge of the social background of the individual composers of pre-Qin works may be relevant for their interpretation (e.g. the fact that Hanfei was a member of the royal family of the state of Han, etc.). But again this does not directly bear on the question of ‘social mobility’ in general.

²⁴¹ According to Wang (2000:125), “[t]he transformation of cosmology from *Sifang* to *Wuxing* during the Warring States period was an intrinsic component of the socio-political transformation from the Bronze age to the imperial age.” (Wang 2000:125) See also Lewis (1990:12) and Yates (1994:57).

²⁴² Allan (1991), Keightley (1999), Keightley (2000), Wheatley (1971).

²⁴³ Wang (2000:27).

²⁴⁴ Wang (2000:34ff).

new symbolic order of the universe introduced a separation of knowledge of the divine realm from the ancestral cult of the king. As argued by Wang, the five-phases cosmology “formed a body of knowledge that was no longer monopolized by the king, but instead was possessed and reproduced by the rising political groups – including religious and natural experts, the rising ministers and bureaucratic officials, military professionals, and the emerging cultural elite or scholars.” (Wang 2000:77) These new groups used the discourse of the new cosmology to construct theories of statecraft and frame political arguments. By doing so they “usurped the hereditary king’s monopolized divine authority and distributed it among themselves, eventually changing the nature of rulership altogether.” (Wang 2000:77)^{245 246}

In sum, over the course of the five centuries of the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó periods, the Zhōu realm underwent a number of important changes to political, social and economic systems, as well as the introduction of a new cosmology which articulated a new relationship between the realm of men and the divine. It was within this new socio-political system and cosmology that the factors which facilitated to the lexicalization of the metacultural concept of *wén* came together.

4.3 Emergence of new economy of cultural capital

The coining of metacultural terms first became possible with the emergence of a group of specialists of statecraft and moral philosophy. These specialists had vested interests in discussing metacultural concepts, which were central to their theories of statecraft, and therefore needed a

²⁴⁵ According to Wang (2000:126), “[t]he rising political groups during the Warring States period used correlative cosmologies to deprive the hereditary king of monopolized divine authority and to disseminate it among themselves, beginning to separate divine knowledge from political power.”

²⁴⁶ For recent discussion of the emergence of ‘Five Phases’ theories in the Zhànguó period, see also Nylan (2010). Nylan (2010) also provides a useful critique of the term ‘correlative cosmology’ which is often used loosely to describe the system of ‘Five Phases.’

specialized vocabulary with which to circulate their ideas more conveniently. Similarly, as will be discussed in chapter 5, the emergence in the 16th to 19th centuries of new uses of the English word *culture* (which originally referred to agriculture and cultivation of plants and fields, but later came to refer to ‘human civilization’ and ‘sets of conventionalized behaviors’) could take place because of a growing group of individuals who were interested in discussing such concepts and thus needed a convenient word, i.e. *culture*, to express them. In the pre-Qín period, the emergence of a group of thinkers and specialists interested in discussing metacultural concepts was the most important condition for the creation of specialized vocabularies of moral philosophy. To a large extent, the composers of the various theories of statecraft and moral philosophy that began to emerge in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE came from among the groups of people vying for employment in the state administrations of the increasingly ruler-centered states. As discussed in the previous section, this group of specialists only emerged after the early Zhōu state lost power to the emerging regional centers that developed independent state-administrations requiring larger numbers of qualified administrators than could be furnished by the members of the ducal families and their relatives.

The Zhànguó period literature is replete with examples of skilled specialists traveling from state to state and peddling their special knowledge of ritual ceremonies, military strategy, theories of statecraft, etc. in order to become gainfully employed.²⁴⁷ When presenting themselves to local rulers in hopes of employment, some of these specialists engaged in debates about the value of past traditions in solving contemporary social problems. In this way, the lexicalization of metacultural concepts such as *wén* was by its very nature intimately linked to the existence of a particular economy of cultural capital which provided the social infrastructure necessary for the

²⁴⁷ Kǒngzǐ himself is, of course, a prime example of a wandering specialist in theories of statecraft and moral philosophy travelling from state to state in search of a position, see Nylan and Wilson (2010:1-2). Other well-known figures include Mèngzǐ, Xúnzǐ and Hán Fēizǐ.

production and circulation of theories of statecraft and moral philosophy.²⁴⁸ The following passage from the *Hánfēizǐ* shows that the exchange of intellectual expertise for rank and remuneration was conceived of in economic terms:

Tián Wěi taught his son, Tián Zhāng, saying: “The rulers **sell** offices and noble rank; the ministers **sell** their knowledge and physical strength. Thus one must rely on oneself, not on other people!” 田頡教其子田章曰：「主賣官爵，臣賣智力，故自恃無恃人。」²⁴⁹

The basic meaning of the word *mài* 賣 is ‘to sell goods in return for money,’ and it is used in this manner elsewhere in the *Hánfēizǐ* and in other late Zhànguó texts. This use of the word ‘sell’ (*mài*) clearly shows that the various moral philosophies and theories of statecraft from the Zhànguó period relied on the existence of a ‘market’ for such intellectual products. Since such a market had not yet come into existence in Shāng and early Zhōu times, these societies did not support the development of philosophical systems (and the accompanying lexicalization of metacultural concepts) by independent specialists to the same extent that the Zhànguó period did.

In sum, lexicalized metaculture does not emerge spontaneously. Rather it evolves within a community of individuals interested in constructing theories and exchanging ideas about metacultural concepts. Based on what is known about the socio-political structure of Shāng and early Zhōu societies, it seems highly unlikely that such a community of independent specialists could have come into existence then. Had there been such thinkers in those periods, it seems fair

²⁴⁸ The relatively rigid aristocratic rank-based system of promotion which seems to have been in place during the Shāng and Western Zhōu did not allow much leeway for an economy of cultural capital to develop. That is, beyond status symbols as ostentatious display and ritual enactment of social rank, there was little room for a class of itinerant retainer-officials looking for employment based on their skill and knowledge.

²⁴⁹ *Hánfēizǐ* 35, Wáng Xiānshèn 王先慎 (2006:337).

to assume that late Chūnqiū and Zhànguó thinkers would have known their works and referred to them in their own theory-building.²⁵⁰

The framework of lexicalized metaculture proposed here helps us overcome the problems related to the small size and biased nature of the pre-Zhànguó corpus.²⁵¹ As argued in chapter 2, the pre-Zhànguó corpus contains no attestations of metacultural *wén*. However, since it is always dangerous to use the absence of evidence as evidence of absence, we cannot rely on this fact alone to conclude that the pre-Zhànguó period did not have metacultural *wén*.²⁵² By linking the lexicalization of metacultural terms to the larger historical context, the theory of lexicalized metaculture provides a way to explain the absence of metacultural *wén* through reference to socio-political factors. For example, since the theory of lexicalized metaculture predicts that an economy of cultural capital must be in place for the coining of metacultural *wén*, this allows us to hypothesize that this metacultural concept would not have been lexicalized before this market of specialized knowledge of theories of statecraft and moral philosophy had been established. Since the socio-political changes used in this explanation have been proposed by numerous scholars independently of the present study of *wén*, this allows us to mitigate the problems of circularity related to relying on the absence of evidence as evidence of absence.

²⁵⁰ While Zhànguó period texts do refer to ideas and sayings of earlier kings, sages, and statesmen they do not contain long quotations from argument-based texts from pre-Zhànguó times. See also Meyer (2012) for a different argument for the absence of argument-based ‘philosophical’ texts from the pre-Zhànguó period.

²⁵¹ For a description of the corpus used in this study, see section 1.7.

²⁵² For useful introduction to the problem of making inferences based on ‘absence of evidence,’ see Sober (2009).

4.4 Contrasting the *Huá Xià* elites of the Zhōu realm and their various ‘others’

Since metaculture is by nature comparative, it tends to flourish in contexts where different traditions or different systems of social mores are confronted.²⁵³ In the pre-Qín Zhōu realm, a proto-anthropological interest in intercultural comparison between the ‘refined tradition’ (*wén*) of the Central States and the differing practices (sometimes referred to as ‘customs’ (*sú* 俗), but never as *wén*) of the various non-Zhōu peoples emerged in the period from the 5th to the 3rd century BCE. Zhōu expansion, due to population growth and military annexation of territory, increased the nature and frequency of Zhōu engagement with non-Zhōu peoples. These peoples adhered to alien practices and some of them may have spoken languages which were incomprehensible to the Zhōu.²⁵⁴ It is fair to assume that there had always been extensive contacts with non-Zhōu peoples in earlier times.²⁵⁵ However, it was not until the latter part of the first millennium BCE that a discourse of the superiority of Zhōu traditions (*wén*) was invoked as the moral justification for saving the ‘uncivilized’ barbarians (*yí* 夷), who were sometimes condescendingly compared to ‘birds and beasts,’²⁵⁶ from themselves by incorporating them into the Zhōu realm and by granting them access to the superior mores and values of the Zhōu elite tradition.²⁵⁷

In the *Zuǒzhuàn*, the composition of which I date to the fifth century BCE²⁵⁸, *wén* is used as an ideal to which the rulers of ‘uncivilized’ states aspired. These states include Chǔ 楚, Wú 吳,

²⁵³ See Tomlinson (2009:18-9).

²⁵⁴ For discussion of the role of language in the formation of Zhōu identity, see Behr (2010).

²⁵⁵ For discussion of interaction between the Shāng and the surrounding peoples, see Liu and Chen (2003), Thorp (2006), Li Min (2008).

²⁵⁶ For discussion of reference to the non-Zhōu as ‘birds and beasts’ (*qínshòu* 禽獸), see Di Cosmo (2002), Pines (2005), Schaberg (2001a), Fiskesjö (2012), among others.

²⁵⁷ Lewis (2003).

²⁵⁸ For the dating of the *Zuǒzhuàn*, see Yáng Bójùn 楊伯峻 (1979) and Yáng Bójùn 楊伯峻 (1990:34-41), Vogelsang (2007), Schaberg (2001a), Pines (2002b).

and Yuè 越 to the south of the ancestral Zhōu heartland. A passage in “Xuan 12.3” describes a battle in which the state of Chǔ thoroughly defeats the Jìn 晉 army. Although representing the victor, a Chǔ officer initiates post-battle negotiations with the Jìn by apologizing for the Chǔ ruler’s lack of mastery of *wén*. “In his youth, our ruler met with sorrowful bereavement, and as a consequence he is not able to *wén*” (寡君少遭閔凶，不能文。).²⁵⁹ This passage suggests that being able ‘to *wén*,’ i.e. to ‘express oneself with rhetorical flourishes’ or ‘to comport oneself according to the ideal patterns of *wén*,’ was a skill that was taken for granted by people from states from the Zhōu heartland, but that had not yet been fully acquired by the ruling elites of the south.

In *Zuǒzhuàn* “Zhao 30.3” the ruler of Wú is described in the following terms by one of his ministers:

Wú is a descendant of Zhōu which has been abandoned on the coast of the sea and is no longer in communication with the Jī clan of the Zhōu. However, now [the state of] Wú has begun to be great again, and can begin to be compared to the states of the *Huá*. Prince Guāng [of Wú] is extremely *wén*, and will surely by himself become like the former kings.” 吳，周之冑裔也，而棄在海濱，不與姬通，今而始大，比于諸華。光又甚文，將自同於先王。²⁶⁰

Huá is the term used by the pan-Zhōu elites to refer to themselves in contrast to non-Zhōu others. The role that *wén* plays in the argument above is revealing. Since metacultural *wén* is, as we have seen, conceived of as the embodiment of the ideal Zhōu traditions, mores, and institutions, it is not surprising that Wú’s return to the Zhōu community is foreshadowed by Prince Guāng’s perfection of *wén*.

²⁵⁹ Interestingly, in this passage *wén* appears to be used as a verb. The passage literally says that the ruler of Chu is unable to *wén*. James Legge translates the passage as follows: “Our ruler, when young, met with sorrowful bereavement, and was not able to cultivate the accomplishments of learning.” (Legge 1960: 318,ii). For discussion of this passage, see also Schaberg (2001:252). Reading *wén* as a noun in this passage is also a possibility. As observed by Pulleyblank (1995:40), *néng* 能 can be followed by both verbs and nouns.

²⁶⁰ Tr. adapted from Legge (1960: 734,ii).

Taken together, these passages from “Xuan 12.3” and “Zhao 30.3” indicate that, at the time they were composed, the rulers of non-Zhōu states were assumed to lack *wén*, while rulers of the core Zhōu states were assumed to rule their people through display of their mastery of *wén*.²⁶¹ In sum, the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* occurred around the middle of the first millennium BCE in the context of a heightened interest in comparing the conventionalized behavior and traditions of the Zhōu elite with those of their non-Zhōu neighbors.

4.5 Crisis of tradition triggering metacultural comparison of past and present

Comparisons between past and present provide a fertile ground for metacultural discourse. Some form of epistemic crisis (real or perceived) triggered by rapid social change is therefore often part of the contexts that are conducive to the development of a heightened metacultural awareness of one’s own social norms and traditions. To use Urban’s (2001) terminology, in periods of cultural inertia, which are characterized by faithful replication of cultural products (e.g., styles in pottery and other artifacts, retellings of myths, enactments of social mores, etc.), the default is for people simply to take for granted that their own set of conventionalized behaviors is the only, or at least the most natural, way to interact with others and the environment. In contrast, during crises of tradition, when even axiomatic epistemic assumptions are questioned and must be justified, people tend to be driven to a heightened reflexive

²⁶¹ See *Xúnzǐ* 14.6 which states that “if those above are *wén*, then those below will be peaceful” (*shàng wén xià ān* 上文下安). See chapter 2, for more detailed discussion of this passage and references to the transformative power of the display of ‘patterned moral perfection’ *wén* in the *Zuǒzhuan* and other pre-Qín texts.

awareness of, and justification for, their own behavioral patterns and their connections to the past.²⁶²

As described in section 4.2, profound changes in the structure of government institutions and social mores as well as in the productive and economic systems of society took place over the course of the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó periods. These changes led to an upheaval of social values and conventions that generated a heightened interest in discussing the relationship between the past and the present. In this context, the *Rú* 儒, as the self-proclaimed transmitters and protectors of the traditional institutions and social mores of the early Zhōu,²⁶³ began to feel a need to justify the value of the Zhōu tradition against the onslaught of new ideas and practices. The perception of a crisis of tradition among conservative thinkers such as Kǒngzǐ and his followers was thus an important factor in the lexicalization of metaculture.

To be sure, any period in time can probably be argued to experience some kind of ‘crisis’ of tradition. Preceding the Chūnqiū period, there was no shortage of events which could have triggered social and institutional ‘crises.’ As examples, one might mention the violent conquest of the Shāng by the Zhōu, the mid-Western Zhōu reform of institutions, or the disastrous defeat of the Zhōu ruler by the *Róng* 戎 in 771 BCE.²⁶⁴ However, since there were too few independent specialists (as argued in section 4.3 above) to transform the nostalgic lamentations of these earlier crises into abstract philosophical and political theories, they did not give rise to the lexicalization of specialized metacultural terms. Needless to say, I do not claim that people did not talk about these events during and after they took place. Rather, I contend that the critical mass of independent specialists simply did not yet exist. In other words, while previous crises

²⁶² For the notion of cultural inertia, see Urban (2001:294-5, n. 14). For the notion of crisis of tradition, see also Tomlinson (2009).

²⁶³ For discussion of the *rú* in pre-Qín times, see Zufferey (2003).

²⁶⁴ For the middle Western Zhōu reforms, see Shaughnessy (1999:323-328).

were undoubtedly commented upon in the form of metacultural *discourse*²⁶⁵, they did not trigger the *lexicalization* of metacultural *wén*.²⁶⁶

The socio-political changes that took place during the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó periods generated an economy of cultural capital—i.e., a market for theories of statecraft and moral philosophy—in which individual thinkers could exchange their theories for wealth and status. In this new ‘market of ideas,’ the erosion of the early Zhōu system of hereditary office-holding served as the main ‘crisis’ that ultimately led conservative thinkers such as Kǒngzǐ and his followers to create a metacultural terminology based on *wén* in which they could discuss the importance of returning to the traditions of the early Zhōu.

It is no surprise that the earliest attested metacultural uses of *wén* emerged in writings attributed to conservative thinkers such as Kǒngzǐ, who saw himself as the custodian of the idealized institutions and mores of the ancient sage-kings. In the *Lúnyǔ*, Kǒngzǐ himself expressed the ideal of conservative preservation (or rather revival) of the idealized institutions of the early Zhōu in his description of himself as a faithful custodian of tradition who “describes and transmits [the past] without creating anything himself and is trustworthy and loves ancient ways” (*shù ér bù zuò, xìn ér hào gǔ* 述而不作，信而好古).²⁶⁷ Since the system of rank-indicating emblems on clothes and banners (referred to as *wén* and *wénzhāng*) was a central part of the eroding ritual system, it is not surprising that self-proclaimed conservative thinkers like Kǒngzǐ saw themselves as protectors of the *wén* of the Zhōu dynasty (reinterpreted in

²⁶⁵ It is, thus, as discussed in chapter 1, crucially important to distinguish metacultural discourse (e.g. statements such as ‘The French do things differently from us. They eat different foods, dress differently, and engage in different pastimes.’) from lexicalized metaculture (e.g. terms such as *customs*, or *culture*. E.g. ‘French *culture* is different from American culture’ or ‘The French and the Germans have different *customs*.’).

²⁶⁶ In other words, while it is logically possible that other lexicalized metacultural terms which were later lost, may have existed in the Western Zhōu or earlier, I suggest that the lack of an ‘economy of cultural capital’ (described in section 4.3) makes this unlikely.

²⁶⁷ *Lúnyǔ* 7.1, Chéng Shùdé 程樹德 (1997:431).

metacultural terms). In contrast, as discussed in chapter 3, iconoclastic works such as the *Hánfēizǐ* and the *Mòzǐ* had no respect for elite Zhōu traditions and, as shown in chapter 3, outright rejected metacultural *wén*.

4.6. Emergence of commentarial tradition

The development of an exegetical tradition around texts such as the *Odes* (*Shī* 詩) and the *Book of History* (*Shū* 書) contributed to an increased historical awareness of differences between contemporary practices and those of the idealized past and thereby helped generate a need for metalinguistic and metacultural concepts and terms.²⁶⁸ Thus many Zhànguó texts contain explicit discussion of the interpretation of *Shī* and *Shū* passages.²⁶⁹ Beyond contributing to the creation of metalinguistic terminology, widespread interest in the meaning of passages from these revered scriptures also led to increased speculation about the traditional institutions and the social mores embodied in them. In order to communicate their interpretations of these foundational texts more efficiently, the Zhànguó exegetes needed to coin new terms for metalinguistic and metacultural concepts. It is thus unsurprising that metacultural uses of *wén* emerged in the theories of conservative thinkers such as Kǒngzǐ, who considered the classics to be a repository of valuable insight about the ideal organization of human society. In sum, the *Shī* and the *Shū*, which were

²⁶⁸ Note that the content of the ‘texts’ such as *Shī* and the *Shū* that I refer to here did not have to have been written down in order to be form the basis of an exegetical tradition. Thus the *Shī*, which originated as a collection of popular songs and court liturgy, probably continued to be transmitted and expounded on as an oral tradition down into the Zhànguó period and beyond, in addition to being transmitted in writing.

Similarly, in ancient India, the Vedas were passed down faithfully for centuries before they were written down and oral transmission has continued to be more highly valued than the written medium even today more than two millennia after the emergence of the Brāhmī script in the late first millennium BCE. See Salomon, Richard (1998), *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, and Daniels & Bright (1996), *The World's Writing Systems*, Oxford University Press.

²⁶⁹ E.g., *Lunyu* 1.15.

known as ‘ancient’ texts even during the Zhànguó period, constituted the core of a relatively small body of texts serving as the backbone of an elite education.²⁷⁰ The exegetical debates over the meaning and importance of these texts created an environment that was conducive to the development of a heightened metacultural awareness.²⁷¹ Thus, as shown in the chapter 3, in these debates, even the *Hánfēizǐ*, which rejected the need to preserve and emulate the ways of the past, and had little use for the study of the *Shī* and the *Shū*, still found it necessary to denounce the *Rú* preoccupation with metacultural *wén*.

4.7 The emergence of the concept and discourse of ‘empire’ (*tiānxià*)

In this section I argue that the emergence of the concept of a ‘culturally unified Zhōu realm of influence’ around the middle of the first millennium BCE, referred to by the expression *tiānxià* 天下 meaning ‘all under heaven’ or ‘empire’, set the stage for the lexicalization of metacultural *wén*. The texts in which the term *tiānxià* is first (and/or most frequently) used to refer to a ‘culturally unified realm of Zhōu elite practices and traditions’ are the same texts in which metacultural *wén* occurs first and/or most frequently, i.e. the *Zuǒzhuàn* and the *Lúnyǔ*. As shown in chapter 2, metacultural *wén* refers to the system of traditions and rites (*lǐ* 禮) established by the Zhōu king. These traditions were assumed by the Zhōu elites themselves to be universal. That is, unlike local *sú* 俗 ‘customs’ that were limited to a specific locality and time period, the *wén* patterns of conventionalized behavior were assumed to serve as the ideal model for human

²⁷⁰ See Schaberg (2000) for detailed discussion of the rhetorical use of quotations from the *Shī* in pre-Qín historiographical writing.

²⁷¹ Although the classical texts making up the incipient canon were composed in the period from the late Shāng down to the early Zhōu, the exegetical tradition surrounding the was only beginning to take definite shape toward the end of the Chūnqiú period and the beginning of the Zhànguó period. For a detailed account of the emergence of a body of canonical texts in early China, see Nylan (2001).

behavior across temporal and geographic boundaries.²⁷² Hence, while the different ‘states’ (*guó* 國) had different ‘customs’ (*sú* 俗), there was only one set of ideal *wén* which was associated with the idea of a ‘culturally’ unified *tiānxià* 天下 realm, or “regime of value.”²⁷³

In chapter 2, I traced the development of metacultural *wén* from its first occurrences in the *Zuǒzhuàn* and the *Lúnyǔ* to its most explicit definitions in the *Xúnzǐ*. In this section I argue that an association between metacultural *wén* and the notion of *tiānxià* as a “regime of value” developed in the same set of texts. Thus, uses of the terms *tiānxià* and *wén* to refer to “regime of value” and “(system of) conventionalized behavior” can be shown to have emerged in the late Chūnqiū period (722-481) or early Zhànguó period (481-221) and reached their full development at the end of the Zhànguó period.²⁷⁴

As observed by Pines (2002a), the expression *tiānxià* only occurs a limited number of times in texts from the first half of the first millennium BCE.²⁷⁵ In the few attested instances it does occur, it appears to refer to the limited royal domain under the direct rule of the Zhōu kings rather than to a culturally defined ‘regime of value.’ The expression *tiānxià* is not attested in bronze inscriptions before the Zhànguó period.²⁷⁶ Instead, pre-Zhànguó bronze inscriptions use the expression *sì fāng* ‘Four Quarters’ as the preferred way to refer to the Zhōu realm.²⁷⁷ All this is to be expected if, as hypothesized here, metacultural *wén* and the use of the expression *tiānxià*

²⁷² See Lewis (2003).

²⁷³ See Pines (2002a:101), “Half a century ago Joseph Levenson defined the traditional concept of *tiānxià* 天下 (“world”, “All under Heaven”) as referring primarily to a cultural realm, being “a regime of value”, as opposed to a political unit, *guó* 國, “a state”.” See Levenson (1952). See also Pines (2000), Pines (2008), Pines (2009).

²⁷⁴ The expression *tiānxià* 天下 is frequently found in Zhànguó period texts. It was “introduced into political discourse relatively late, and is largely a creation of the middle to late Chūnqiū period (722-453).” (Pines 2002a:101) “*tiānxià* was a supra-political unit, larger than the manageable Zhōngguó, “the Central States”, i.e. the Chinese empire.” (Pines 2002a:101) “[...] inclusive and exclusive definitions of *tiānxià* sheds new light on the complex processes of identity building in the Zhōu world on the verge of imperial unification.” (Pines 2002a:101)]

²⁷⁵ The analysis of pre-Zhànguó uses and meanings of the term *tiānxià* provided here is drawn in large part on (Pines 2002a:102).

²⁷⁶ As observed by Pines (2002a:102, n. 6), *tiānxià* does occur in a bronze inscription from the late 4th century BCE, see also Mattos (1997:104-111).

²⁷⁷ See the discussion of the concept of *sì fāng* ‘Four Quarters,’ in section 4.4 above.

to refer to a ‘regime of value’ arose together. As argued in chapter 2, metacultural *wén* did not emerge until after the middle of the first millennium BCE. Hence, Pines’ (2002a) observation—that *tiānxià* as referring to a ‘regime of value’ did not occur before the end of the Chūnqiū period—seems to suggest an interdependence between this term and metacultural *wén*.

The expression *tiānxià* only occurs once in the authentic pre-Zhànguó parts of the *Shū*: “He who is in the position of king should be first in charismatic power; then the people will emulate him under [the supreme deity,] Heaven, and the king will be [even] more illustrious” 其惟王位在德元，小民乃惟刑；用于天下，越王顯。(“Shao Gao”, tr. adapted from Legge 1960:432).²⁷⁸ Another early occurrence of *tiānxià* can be found in the Ode 241: “The king blazed forth his anger; he marshaled his armies, to check the foe he marched to Lu, he secured the safety of Zhōu, he united all under Heaven” 王赫斯怒，爰整其旅，以按徂旅，以篤周祜，以對於天下。(Máo 214, tr. Waley (1996:238)). In both cases, Pines (2002a) takes *tiānxià* to refer to the “area under the jurisdiction of the Zhōu Kings.” Support for this reading of *tiānxià* can be found in the meaning of the expression *tiān zhī xià* 天之下 in Ode 205: “Everywhere under Heaven is the King’s land, each of those who live on the land is the King’s servant” 溥天之下，莫非王土，率土之濱，莫非王臣。(Máo 205, tr. Pines (2002a:102)).²⁷⁹ In other words, just as the term *wén* is attested in non-metacultural senses in pre-Zhànguó period texts, also it can also be argued that all the pre-Zhànguó period attestations of the expression *tiānxià* refer to ‘the limited domain under royal jurisdiction’ rather than to a ‘regime of value.’²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the dating of the different parts of the *Shū*, see Nylan (2001) and Qū Wànlǐ 屈萬里(1983).

²⁷⁹ Waley (1996:189) translates this passage as follows: “Everywhere under Heaven is no land that is not the king’s. To the borders of all those lands none but is the king’s slave.”

²⁸⁰ Another possible reading of *tiānxià* in the pre-Zhànguó period is to ‘everything under [the supreme deity] Heaven,’ see Pines (Pines 2002a:102).

As shown in section 4.2 above, the royal authority of the Zhōu kings and the political cohesion of the realm nominally under their control were rapidly disintegrating during the Chūnqiū period. In spite of this, “frequent diplomatic contacts between Chūnqiū states might have reinforced the sense of cultural unity between members of the ruling elites.” (Pines 2002a:102) Thus, towards the very end of the first half of the first millennium BCE, the term *tiānxià* started being used to refer to “the Zhōu oikoumenē” or “empire.” (Pines 2002a:102)²⁸¹

Pines (2002:103) argues that several passages in the *Zuǒzhuàn* support “Levenson’s observation of *tiānxià* as a cultural realm, ‘a regime of value’ [based on] the common values of the ruling aristocracy in Chūnqiū states.” (Pines 2002a:103)²⁸² Since the limits of *tiānxià* were defined in terms of adherence to pan-Zhōu elite practices and traditions, non-Zhōu groups following their own customs were not included.²⁸³ The exclusion of non-Zhōu groups from the Zhōu oikoumenē is illustrated by the following *Zuǒ* passage:

Who are to blame for the fact that the Róng possess the Central States (*Zhōngguó*)? Hou Ji carefully tended to All under Heaven (*tiānxià*). Now the Róng control it. Is this not a calamity? 戎有中國，誰之咎也？后稷封殖天下，今戎制之，不亦難乎？²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ According to Pines (2002a), this increased sense of ‘cultural unity’ is reflected an increase in the frequency of the use of the term *tiānxià* in the the *Zuǒzhuàn*. “The *Zuǒzhuàn* [...] reflects a gradual increase in references to *tiānxià*: this term appears only four times in the first half of the *Zuǒzhuàn*, but no less than eighteen times in the speeches of the sixth century BCE statesmen.”[10] (Pines 2002a:102)

The dating of the composition of the *Zuǒ commentary* to the *Chūnqiū* is highly controversial. As mentioned above, I place the composition of the *Zuǒzhuàn* in the fifth century BCE. For a well-argued case for dating it to around 400 BCE, see Yáng Bójùn 楊伯峻 (1979) and Yáng Bójùn 楊伯峻(1990:34-41), who places it in the period between 403 and 389 BCE. See also Brooks (Brooks 2003) who also places the formation of the *Zuǒzhuàn* in the 4th century BCE. Henry (1999) also contains useful discussion of the distribution of different phrases which may help identify layers in the *Zuǒzhuàn*.

²⁸² Pines (2002a:102, n. 11) analyzes *tiānxià* in *Zuǒ*, Zhuang 12: 192; Cheng 2: 804; Xiang 26: 1112; Xiang 31:1195; Zhao 8: 1302; Ding 10: 1583 as referring to the “public opinion” of the pan-Zhou elite.

²⁸³ According to Pines (2002a), in the *Zuǒzhuàn* the limits of *tiānxià* “never surpassed that of the Zhōu world: alien tribes were apparently beyond the fringes of All under Heaven. [See *Zuǒ*, Xi 24: 425]]”

²⁸⁴ *Zuǒ*, Zhao 9, 1309.

Here the boundaries of *tiānxià* are the same as those of the ‘Central States’ (*Zhōngguó*). The implied complementarity between the non-Zhōu Róng and *tiānxià* clearly indicate that non-Zhōu groups were excluded from the realm of All under Heaven (*tiānxià*).²⁸⁵ Thus the internecine struggle among the Zhōu states for the position of lord-protector (*bà*) was not a struggle for total world dominance as much as a quest for the leadership of the “the dwellers of the Central States, the Xia.”²⁸⁶

The term *tiānxià* occurs twenty-three times in the *Lúnyǔ*. In comparison, it occurs 22 times in the *Zuǒzhuàn*, which is ten times as long. The predominant meaning of the term is still ‘regime of value,’ as illustrated by *Lúnyǔ* 12.1, 17.21, 4.10. Thus the concept of *tiānxià* in the *Lúnyǔ* is largely the same as that found in the *Zuǒzhuàn*. That is, *tiānxià* refers to the civilized world that is coterminous with the Zhōu realm of the Central States (*Zhōngguó*) ruled by the Zhōu elites, who referred to themselves as the *Huáxià*, the *Huá* or the *Xià*. The following passage from *Lúnyǔ* 14.17 illustrates that this realm was understood as a ‘regime of value.’

Zigong asked, “Guǎn Zhòng was not a Good person, was he? When Duke Huán had Prince Jiū murdered, Guǎn Zhòng was not only incapable of dying with his master, he moreover served his master’s murderer as Prime Minister.” The Master replied, “When Guǎn Zhòng served as Duke Huán’s Prime Minister, he allowed him to become lord-protector over the other feudal lords, uniting and ordering All under Heaven. To this day, the people continue to enjoy the benefits of his achievements—if it were not for Guǎn Zhòng, we would all be wearing our hair loose and fastening our garments on the left. How could he be expected to emulate the petty fidelity of a common husband or wife, going off to hang himself and die anonymously in some gully or ditch?” 子貢曰：「管仲非仁者與？桓公殺公子糾，不能死，又相之。」子曰：「管仲相桓公，霸諸侯，一匡天下，民到於今受其賜。微管仲，吾其被髮左衽矣！豈若匹夫匹婦之為諒也，自經於溝瀆而莫之知也。」²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ “Tiānxià is [...] coterminous with Zhōngguó, and the Róng are evidently excluded from it, just as barbarians were often excluded from the Greek oikoumenē.” (Pines 2002a:103)

²⁸⁶ See Pines (2002a:103). According to Pines (2002a:103, n. 18), a passage from *Zuǒ*, Zhao 26: 1474-1475, provides an example of a strategy for “attaining All under Heaven” which refers to a plan proposed by Fei Wuji to King Ping of the state of Chu which consists in “neutralizing the power of the state of Jin.” In other words, “attaining All under Heaven” refers to the Chu King’s quest to dominate the other *Xià* states.

²⁸⁷ *Lúnyǔ* 14.17, tr. adapted from Slingerland (2003a:161).

As observed by Pines (2002a:104), “When Confucius praised the great Qi statesman, Guan Zhong (d. 645), for bringing unity and order to All under Heaven,” he definitely knew that Guan’s efforts had stabilized only parts of the Zhōu realm, but this did not matter: the Central States were coterminous with All under Heaven. For Confucius the limits of the civilized world were evidently the limits of the universe.” (Pines 2002a:104)

In sum, as argued by Pines (2002a), the expression *tiānxià* begins to refer to a realm of value in the late Chūnqiū period, referring to more or less the same Zhōu realm as the term *Zhōngguó* ‘Central States’. During the Zhànguó period, *tiānxià* retains this meaning of ‘regime of value’ while at the same time developing other uses referring to political or economic spheres of influence.²⁸⁸ The realm originally referred to by the term also expanded to include the “entire known world” (including the non-Zhōu ‘barbarians’) in some Zhànguó period works.²⁸⁹

While the term *tiānxià* is used to refer to a ‘regime of value’ in texts from the fifth century BCE, the *Xúnzǐ* from the mid-3rd century BCE is the first extant text to contain paragraphs that explicitly link *tiānxià* in this sense to metacultural *wén*:

王者[...] 致賢而能以救不肖，致彊而能以寬弱，戰必能殆之而羞與之鬥，委然成文，以示之天下，而暴國安自化矣。²⁹⁰

The [true] ruler [...] puts forth²⁹¹ the worthy and is thereby able to save the unworthy. He puts forth the strong and is thereby able to be broadminded toward the weak. If he engages in warfare then he will necessarily endanger [his enemies] but he still considers it shameful to fight with anyone. Indeed, he perfects *wén* in order to display it to all under Heaven (*tiānxià*) so that violent states will transform themselves peacefully.

Pines (2009) argues that the idea of a unified ‘empire’ (*tiānxià*) had become one of the main tropes of political discourse and theories of statecraft by the late Zhànguó period. Already in the

²⁸⁸ These other uses of *tiānxià* fall beyond the scope of this paper. For more detailed discussion of these, see Pines (2002a).

²⁸⁹ E.g. the *Mòzǐ*, see Pines (2002).

²⁹⁰ *Xúnzǐ* 7.1, Wáng Xiānqiān 王先謙 (1988:108).

²⁹¹ As mentioned above, I am *zhì* 致 as a verb meaning ‘to put forth.’ It is also possible to read *zhì* 致 as a graphic variant for *zhì* 至 ‘utmost, to the highest degree.’

late Chūnqiū period, the rulers of the various states had fought for the position of lord-protector of the Zhōu oikoumenē. At that time the ceremonial position of Zhōu King as the Son of Heaven was still sufficiently respected, and the various lords-protector shied away from declaring themselves the rulers of *tiānxià*. In Zhànguó-period texts such as the *Xúnzǐ*, the nature of kingship and the virtues of the ‘true king’ were topics of fierce debate. Thus in the *Xúnzǐ* passage quoted above, the true king is described in primarily moral terms. Only by developing moral perfection will the King truly succeed in ruling over the civilized world (*tiānxià*) and making ‘violent states’ (*bào guó*) change their ways. In other words, this passage shows that metacultural *wén* referred to the ideal ‘external patterns’ of the Zhōu civilization or ‘empire’ (*tiānxià*) embodied in the person of the ruler.²⁹²

As will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, the English word *culture* also started to develop metacultural uses at the time the British had begun to develop the sense of representing an empire that defended and propagated the highest ideals of human civilization. See for example the use of the word *culture* by Matthew Arnold in the mid- to late 19th century. Similarly, it seems reasonable to assume that the concept of *wén* arose in tandem with the pre-Qín notion of ‘empire’ *tiānxià* 天下. To be sure, the historical contexts which lead to British imperialism are very different from those in which the notion of *tiānxià* as a ‘regime of value’ or ‘empire’ arose in the pre-Qín period. However, at an abstract level, it is possible to discern certain structural parallels. In both cases, a terminology of ‘civilization’ based on allegedly

²⁹² Another link between metacultural *wén* and *tiānxià* can be found in *Xúnzǐ* 19.2c: “All rites begin with coarseness, are brought to fulfillment with ‘external patterns’ (*wén*), and end with pleasure and beauty. [...] Indeed, are the rites not the ultimate [perfection]? When they are established and extolled, then in All under Heaven (*tiānxià*) no one can subtract or add anything to them. Roots and branches are in mutual harmony; ends and beginnings fit each other. The perfection of external patterns (*wén*) is used to have [proper] distinctions; the perfection of discernment serves to have explanations. In All under Heaven, those who follow them (*wén* patterns) are under proper rule; those who do not are in chaos; those who follow them are safe; those who do not are imperiled; those who follow them survive, those who do not perish.” 凡禮，始乎稅，成乎文，終乎悅校。[...] 禮豈不至矣哉！立隆以為極，而天下莫之能損益也。本末相順，終始相應，至文以有別，至察以有說，天下從之者治，不從者亂；從之者安，不從者危；從之者存，不從者亡。（*Xúnzǐ* 19.2c, tr. adapted from Knoblock (1988-1994:vol. 2, p. 60).

universally applicable moral values arose in tandem with the political project of empire-building.²⁹³

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the lexicalization of metaculture (e.g., the coining of terms for the conceptualization of ‘culture,’ such as the English word *culture* in the 18th and 19th centuries and the Old Chinese word *wén* in the second half of the first millennium BCE) should be approached as a historical problem. The lexicalization of metaculture can only be understood when linked to specific aspects of the historical contexts in which it took place. Conversely, lexicalized metaculture serves as a window into the language-specific conceptualizations of tradition and conventionalized behavior in which concepts of identity are constructed. The theory of lexicalized metaculture thus has the potential to contribute significantly to the study of the emergence of a collectively shared metacultural awareness in pre-Qín China and its implications for the simultaneous reformulation of Zhōu and non-Zhōu identities in metacultural terms.

It is obviously impossible to gain a complete understanding of the complex historical context which contributed to the lexicalization of metacultural *wén*. Thus, the aspects of the historical context discussed here do not represent the full picture. Nevertheless, I do suggest that they illustrate the explanatory potential of the framework of lexicalized metaculture and show

²⁹³ See also Di Cosmo (2002) for similar parallels between various empires, ancient and modern’ with respect to the distinction between self and (barbaric) ‘others’ used to justify warfare against those who place themselves outside the ‘civilized world.’ Thus, according to Di Cosmo, “[i]t seems a shared human experience that the malleable substance at the origin of “civilizations” – a sense of cultural cohesion, shared destiny, and common origin – coagulates into a harder and stronger matter when peoples who belong to it are confronted, at times in a threatening way, by other peoples who are seen as being different and “beyond the pale.”” (p. 1) “[T]he antagonism between those who are “in” and those who are “out,” [2] and the criteria the community adopts to demarcate not only its territory but also the characteristics that are assumed to be the very basis of its *raison d’être* (a faith, a race, a code of behavior, a shared set of values) are at the foundation of how a “civilization” defines itself.” (Di Cosmo (2002:1-2)

how it enables us to formulate specific hypotheses about the historical context which led to the crystallization of a collectively shared metacultural awareness of (a segment of) the literary Zhōu elite. Furthermore, by enabling us to formulate specific hypotheses about possible links between historical changes in the larger socio-political context and the lexicalization of metacultural *wén*, the theoretical framework of lexicalized metaculture provides an explanation for why the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* could not have occurred in the first half of the first millennium BCE that mitigates the problematic reliance on absence of evidence. Since the relevant socio-political contexts—in which salaried specialists of theories of statecraft and moral philosophy created and debated theories of ‘conventionalized behavior’—did not develop before the late Chūnqiū or early Zhànguó period, there simply was no need to coin a term for a concept which had yet to gain currency.

Chapter 5 Found in Translation: The Emergence of ‘Culture’ in the *Lúnyǔ*

In the preceding four chapters I have traced the lexical development of the word *wén* from the basic meaning ‘pattern’ in pre-Zhànguó usage to more abstract metacultural concepts in texts from the Zhànguó period. This chapter will map the last leg of this word’s long and complex journey from ‘pattern’ to ‘culture;’ namely the story of how the English word *culture* came to be the most common translation of metacultural *wén*. Like metacultural *wén*, the metacultural uses of the English word *culture* also developed from earlier non-metacultural meanings. Before this development took place over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries other words were used to translate *wén*.

This chapter will be structured around a case study of the emergence and increasing frequency of the word *culture* in translations of the term *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* 論語 over the course of the last 200 years, which will allow us to address the following questions. When did the Old Chinese word *wén* start to be translated as *culture* in English? And how do we account for the increase in the use of the word *culture* to render the Old Chinese word *wén* in translations of the *Lúnyǔ* in the period from the first instance in Legge’s translation of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1861 to the present day? To answer these questions I will have to map the lexical semantic development of the word *culture* from its origin as a Latin loan word referring to ‘agriculture’ in the 15th century to its various metacultural uses in present-day colloquial English and current anthropological theory. What is the internal semantic structure of the polysemous word *culture* as it is used today? And how did the various meanings and uses of this term develop and change during the period

from its entry into the English language in the 15th century to the present daover the course of the last two centuries? Addressing these questions in the first half of the chapter will allow me, in the latter half, to show that the growing popularity of *culture* as a translation of *wén* is to a large extent due to lexical semantic changes of the English word *culture*. Rather than being the reflection of a deepening understanding of the meaning of the pre-Qín metacultural concepts referred to by the word *wén*, the emergence of the use of the English word *culture* as a translation of *wén* is more a consequence of independent lexical semantic changes in the English language. That is, the now frequently assumed semantic equivalence between the word *wén* and the English word *culture* is a bi-product of the process of translation. In other word, it was found in translation. As argued in the discussion of the absence of metacultural *wén* in the *Mengzi* in chapter 4, assuming that metacultural *wén* referes to the same metacultural concept as the Modern English word *culture* is problematic.

In the discussion of the complexities involved in translating one highly language-specific metacultural concept such as *wén* using an equally, if not more, complex metacultural concept in English, i.e. *culture*, I will also touch on the hermeneutic problems raised by using the English term *culture* as an (often undefined) analytical category in studies of pre-Qín thought and history. These problems are compounded by the fact that ‘culture’ was key concept in the so-called culturalist paradigm, or culturalism, in Chinese history which was launched by Fairbank and Levenson in the 1940s and 1950s and remained a dominant theoretical framework until the 1980s and 1990s.²⁹⁴ Does the increasing frequency of the term *culture* as translation of *wén* during the 20th century indicate a lingering effect of culturalism in Western studies of Chinese history?

²⁹⁴ Here I use the term culturalism to refer to the so-called ‘culturalist paradigm’ formulated by mid-20th century Western sinologists such as John K. Fairbank and Joseph R. Levenson, see Fairbank (1942) and Levenson (1953) among others. See section 5.3.1 for a fuller discussion of culturalism in Chinese studies.

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 5.1 briefly describes the increasing frequency of the word *culture* as a translation of the term *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* in the 19th and 20th centuries. Section 5.2 contains a concise survey of the complex semantic field of the term *culture* that illustrates the extent to which synchronic polysemy can be explained as the result of diachronic lexical changes. Since mapping all theoretical definitions of the word ‘culture’ is exceedingly complex, and since there are already a number of excellent studies on this topic²⁹⁵, I will limit myself to the two most influential concepts of ‘culture,’ i.e., (i) Arnold’s (1869) notion of ‘high culture’ as a single true universal culture of human civilization, discussed in section 5.2.1, and (ii) the anthropological notion of cultures as ‘complex wholes’ encompassing all the conventionalized behaviors of people living in a specific time and place, which will be the topic of section 5.2.2. Section 5.2.3 situates the emergence of metacultural uses of the term *culture* in the diachronic evolution of the entire semantic field of the term. Section 5.3 shows how the rise of culturalism in the field of Chinese studies coincides with the popularization of the term ‘culture’ as an analytical category in 20th century in the humanities and the social sciences. Section 5.3 also discusses the extent to which the culturalist paradigm may have contributed (and continues to contribute) to the widespread use of the term *culture* in accounts of Early Chinese ‘identity.’ In section 5.4 I revisit the problem, presented in section 5.1, of translating metacultural concepts via a discussion of the various renderings of *wén* in translations of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1691 to 2003. Section 5.5 concludes the chapter by summarizing the interconnections among (i) the increased popularity of *culture* as an analytical category in the humanities and social sciences in general, (ii) the increased use of *culture* as a translation of *wén*

²⁹⁵ Important recent studies of the concept of ‘culture’ include Herbert (1991), Masuzawa (1998) and Williams (1985).

in the *Lúnyǔ*, and (iii) the lingering influence of culturalist ways of thinking in current studies of identity in pre-Qín China.

5.1 Increasing use of the term *culture* in translations of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1691 to 2007

The graph *wén* <文>²⁹⁶ occurs forty-two times in standard editions of the received version of the *Lúnyǔ*.²⁹⁷ Of these forty-two occurrences, thirteen form parts of proper names or posthumous titles, e.g., Wén Wáng 文王, Jin Wéngōng 晉文公, etc.²⁹⁸ Excluding these instances leaves twenty-nine occurrences of *wén* that may potentially be translated as *culture*. The case study of lexicalized metaculture in translation undertaken in this chapter will be based on these twenty-nine occurrences.

²⁹⁶ I use angled brackets < > to indicate that I refer to graphs. Since the same Old Chinese word can often be written with different graphs, the distinction between word and graph is important to maintain. For discussion of various ways to write the word *wén*, see Bái Yúlán 白於藍 (2008:150, 326, 340), Feng Qiyong and Deng Anshen (2006:568), Gūwēnzǐ gūlín biānzuǎn wěiyuánhui (1999), and Wáng Huī 王輝 (2008:665, 679, 681).

²⁹⁷ The standard concordances Harvard-Yenching (1966) and Lau and Chen (1995b) both list forty-two token occurrences of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ*.

²⁹⁸ The thirteen uses of *wén* in proper names and posthumous titles in the *Lúnyǔ* are:

Part of royal name:

Wén Wáng 文王 (LY 9.5), Wén 文 [=文王] (LY 19.22a, LY 9.22b)

Part of posthumous names of Dukes:

Jin Wéngōng 晉文公 (LY 14.15)

Part of posthumous titles (/names) of ministers:

(Gōngshū) Wénzǐ (公叔)文子 (LY 14.13a, LY 14.13b, LY 14.18); Kǒng Wénzǐ 孔文子 (LY 5.15); Chén Wénzǐ 陳文子 (LY 5.19b); Jì Wénzǐ 季文子 (LY 5.20); Zāng Wénzhòng 臧文仲 (LY 5.18, LY 15.14); (Lìngyǐn) Zǐwén (令尹)子文 (LY 5.19a)

Many translators add footnotes suggesting that some of these uses of *wén* in names and titles may be translated as “cultured.” Thus (Dawson 1993:xxv) suggests that “King Wen, who laid the foundations for the establishment of the Zhōu dynasty, was posthumously known as the ‘cultured king.’” (Dawson 1993:xxv) And in his commentary to LY 5.15, Slingerland (2003:45) suggests that the posthumous name Kǒng Wénzǐ 孔文子 may be translated as “Cultured Master Kong.” However, since these suggested translations occur in footnotes rather than in the main text of the translations, I have decided not to discuss them here. Only the three cases where the meaning of *wén* in posthumous titles is explicitly discussed in the text of the *Lúnyǔ* itself, i.e., LY 5.15a, 5.15b, 14.18, are included among the twenty-nine occurrences analyzed here. For more discussion of *wén* in posthumous titles, see section 2.1 in chapter 2.

Table 2 indicates how many of these occurrences are translated as *culture* in twenty-two representative translations from 1691 to 2007. The first column provides the names of the translators and the year of publication. The second column indicates the number of occurrences of *wén* in a given translation are rendered in English using words based on the roots *cultur-* and *cultivat-* (i.e., *culture*, *cultured*, *cultural*, *acculturate*, *cultivation*, *cultivate*). Column three indicates the corresponding percentages. Since translations of the *Lúnyǔ* before 1900 are few and far between, I have included all the translations that I have been able to find. An “*” indicates partial translations. For the 20th and 21st centuries, only complete translations have been included.²⁹⁹

Table 2. Uses of *cultur-/cultivat-*based words in translations of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* 1691-2007.³⁰⁰

Translator and year of publication	Number of times <i>wén</i> is translated as <i>cultur-</i>	Percentage of occurrences of <i>wén</i> is translated as <i>cultur-</i>
Intorcetta (1691)	0	0
*Marshman (1809)	0	0
Collie (1970 [1828])	0	0
*Barnard (1855)	0	0
Legge (1861)	2	6.9
Jennings (1895)	0	0
Gū Hóngmíng (1898)	1	3.4
Lyall (1909)	14	48.3
Soothill (1910)	8	28.6
Waley (1938)	17	58.7
Ware (1950) ³⁰¹	8	27.6
Lau (1979)	13	44.8
Dawson (1993)	18	62.1
Leys (1997)	9	31

²⁹⁹ While not included in the table, the partial translations by Giles (1907) and Lin (1938) will be still be discussed in the following sections as needed. Other partial and re-arranged translations included are Brown (1927) and Cheng (1948). Wilhelm (1931) contains an English translation by George H. Danton and Annina Periam Danton of Wilhelm’s German translation of part of the *Lunyu*. Since Ezra Pound did not know Chinese and based his English rendering of the *Lunyu* entirely on other translations, Pound (1956) has also not been included in table 2.

³⁰⁰ For reviews of the translations of the *Lúnyǔ* by Ames and Rosemont (1998), Brooks and Brooks (1997), Dawson (1993), Huang (1997), Lau (1979), Leys (1997) and Hinton (1998a), see Schaberg (2001b) and Cheang (2000).

³⁰¹ Ware published a slightly modified version of his (1950) translation as Ware (1955). However, since both translate *wén* as *culture* in the same contexts, I have only counted these translations once.

Brooks and Brooks (1997)	20	69
Huang (1997)	15	51.7
Ames and Rosemont (1998)	12	41.4
Hinton (1998a)	22	75.9
Slingerland (2003a)	27	93.1
Watson (2007) ³⁰²	16	55.2

Although the earliest English translation of the *Lúnyǔ* dates to the late 17th century, the word *culture* does not start to appear in translations of the text until after the middle of the 19th century. Over the course of the 150 years since the first two translations (2/29 =6.9%) of *wén* as *culture* in Legge (1861), the tendency was for more and more occurrences of *wén* to be translated as *culture*. Periods of rapid growth occurred from 1900 to 1938 with 14/29 (=48.3%) in Lyall (1909) and 17/29 (58.7%) in Waley (1938) and again from 1990 to 2007, with an average of eighteen occurrences of *wén* translated as *culture* in the six translations by Dawson (1993), Leys (1997), Brooks and Brooks (1997), Huang (1997), Hinton (1998a), Slingerland (2003a) and Watson (2007). With 27/29 (=93.1%), Slingerland (2003a) represents the peak of the tendency to translate *wén* as *culture* that characterizes translations of the *Lúnyǔ* in the last 150 years.

The exponential increase in the use of the word *culture* to translate *wén* can be charted as in Figure 11. Each dot in Figure 11 indicates the number of times *wén* is translated as *culture* in the translations in Table 2. The placement of each translation on the x-axis is determined by the year of publication. For years for which there are more than one translation, i.e., 1997 and 1998, the dots are based on the average count. For example, the counts for Ames and Rosemont (1998) and Hinton (1998) are 12 and 22, yielding the average of 17, which is plotted into the chart in Figure 11 for that year.

³⁰² Watson was born in 1925, so even if his translation is published in 2007, it may still reflect ways of thinking about ‘culture’ that are more representative of earlier periods. Nevertheless, with 16 instances of *wén* translated as *culture*, Watson (2007) still follows the tendency from the latter part of the 20th century to translate more than 50% of the occurrences of *wén* as *culture*.

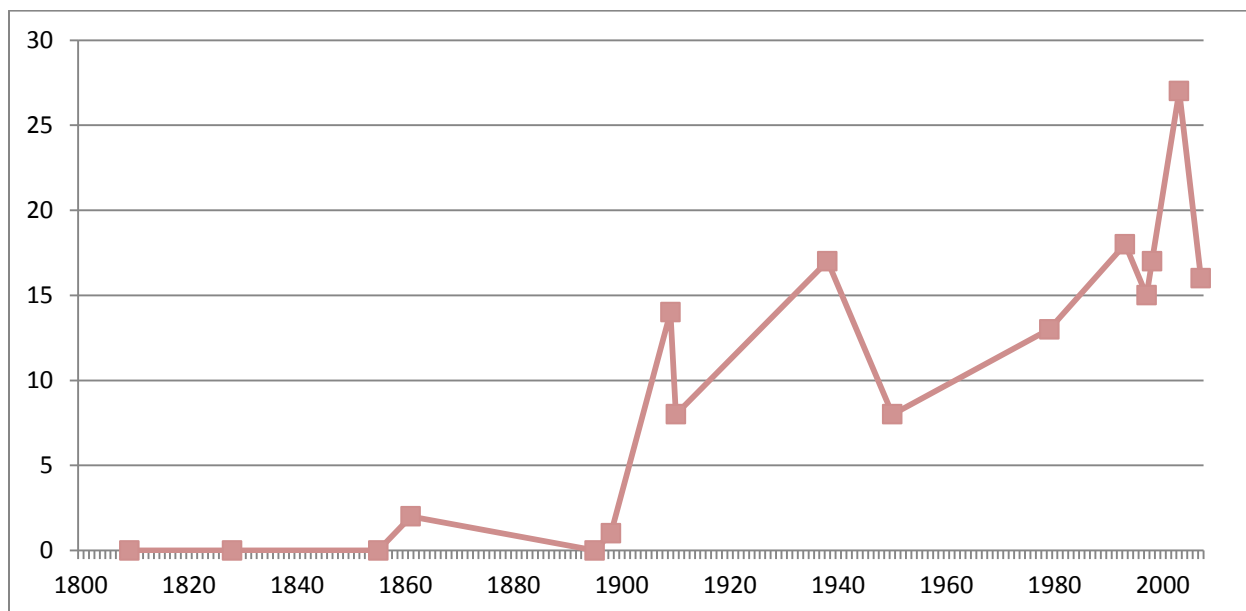


Figure 11. Increase in use of the word *culture* as the translation of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ*.

In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss how this striking increase in the use of the word *culture* over the course of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries can be explained. In section 5.2 I will present a survey of the central stages in the historical transformations of the Modern English term *culture*. Readers familiar with the history of this term may wish to skip directly to the summary in section 5.3.

5.2 The emergence of metacultural uses of the term *culture*

The word *culture* has a multitude of meanings both in colloquial English and as a theoretical term.³⁰³ Over the course of its more than 500-year history, beginning with its early uses in early Modern English as an agricultural term referring to the cultivation of the soil, the term *culture* has evolved to become a central “reality-constituting” term in contemporary English.³⁰⁴ I will limit myself here to the development to two main concepts of ‘culture’: (i) the imperial/universalistic notion of (high) culture as the only true and natural way for civilized man to organize and express social life; and (ii) the particularistic or relativistic notion of culture as an autonomous ‘complex whole,’ which is found in different guises in association with the nation state, or in the more egalitarian anthropological concept of ‘culture’ as the way of life of a particular group of people (which may or may not coincide with a politically defined nation-state). But before embarking on a discussion of these two central metacultural uses of the term *culture*, we first need to understand how these specialized abstract concepts grew out of earlier meanings of the word.

Dictionaries vary greatly in how well they represent polysemy. The default folk theory of polysemy seems to be that words have ‘lists’ of different meanings. Mathews’ (1943) still widely used Chinese-English dictionary illustrates the tendency to juxtapose different meanings with little or no explicit analysis of how they may be related through regular lexical processes. In contrast, the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* is based on traditional lexicographic principles and generally does a good job of indicating the interrelations between various sub-meanings.

³⁰³ For this reason it has been called “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (Williams 1985:87). See also Masuzawa (1998). As observed by Browning (1995:313), Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1960) identify more than 160 different definitions of the words *culture* and *Kultur* in English, French and German.

³⁰⁴ The phrase “reality-constituting” is from Masuzawa (1998:70). See also Williams (1983:xvii).

Figure 12 lists the various current meanings of the word *culture* found in the 2003 online edition of the *OED*.

Figure 12. Synchronic polysemy of the word *culture*.³⁰⁵

I. The cultivation of land, and derived senses.

- 1.a. The action or practice of cultivating the soil; tillage.
- 2.a. The cultivating or rearing of a plant or crop.
- 2.b. The raising of animals (e.g., oysters, bees), or production of animal products (e.g., silk).
- 3.a. The artificial growing of microorganisms, or cells, tissues, etc., in vitro.
- 3.b. The product of such culture; a growth of artificially maintained microorganisms, cells, etc.

II. Extended uses (derived from branch I).

- 4.a. The cultivation of the mind, faculties, manners; improvement by education and training.
- 4.b. The training and improvement of the human body. Now *rare*.
- 4.c. The devoting of attention to or the study of a subject or pursuit.
5. Refinement of mind, taste, and manners; artistic and intellectual development. Hence: the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively. (Mass noun)
- 6.a. The distinctive ideas, customs, social behavior, products, or way of life of a particular society, people, or period. Hence: a society or group characterized by such customs, etc. (Count noun)
- 6.b. A way of life or social environment characterized by or associated with the specified quality or thing (e.g., *café culture*, *drug culture*); a group of people subscribing or belonging to this (e.g., *youth culture*).
- 6.c. The philosophy, practices, and attitudes of an institution, business, or other organization (e.g., *corporate culture*).

Rather than an unstructured list of a dozen different meanings, the *OED* glosses given in Figure 12 can be organized into two main meanings: (I) the concrete sense of growing or cultivating, and (II) the derived, more abstract sense of the development of a system of conventionalized behaviors. Each of these main meanings is divided into three sub-meanings, some of which are further sub-divided into more specialized meanings. An implicit analysis of the lexical relations between the different meanings is thus built into the structure of the dictionary entry itself and illustrates the point that polysemous words do not simply have a list of unrelated meanings.

Lexical semanticists and lexicographers have long observed that “polysemy is [...] the synchronic reflection of diachronic semantic change.” (Geeraerts 1997:6) That is, to a large

³⁰⁵ The glosses in Figure 12 are based on the entry for the word *culture* in the 2003 online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Obsolete meanings have been omitted, and the wording of the glosses has been shortened and edited.

extent “the synchronic links that exist between the various senses of an item coincide with diachronic mechanisms of semantic extension such as metaphor and metonymy.” (Geeraerts 1997:6)³⁰⁶ The development of the various current meanings of the term *culture* in Modern English is a good example of this intimate relationship between synchronic variation and diachronic change. Indeed, all the other meanings of *culture* listed in Figure 12 can be demonstrated to be related to the central prototypical meaning (I) ‘grow, cultivate’ through various lexical processes (metaphoric extension, semantic specialization, generalization, etc.).

According to the definition proposed in chapter 1, the only meanings of *culture* listed in figure 12 which classify as metacultural concepts are the meanings in II. 5 and II.6. In chapter 2 I showed how metacultural meanings of *wén* derived from non-metacultural meanings in the late Chuniqiu or early Zhànguó period. In the remainder of section 5.2 I show how various metacultural meanings of the term of *culture* similarly derived from non-metacultural uses over the last three or four centuries.

The English root *cult-(ur-)* ultimately originates from a derivative form *cultus/cultura* of the verb *colere* ‘to grow, cultivate; inhabit’ in Latin.³⁰⁷ As witnessed by the phrasal expressions *cultus agri* or *cultura agri* ‘(lit.) the cultivation of the soil/field’ meaning (I.1.a), the Latin word

³⁰⁶ For a different formulation of the “correlation between synchronous polysemy and diachronic change,” (Geeraerts 1997:6) see also Brown and Witkowski (1983:84): “Polysemy is ubiquitous in language and its investigation has considerable potential for illuminating human cognition. In addition, the regular patterns of lexical change outlined here indicate that the lexicon is as amenable to systematic investigation as are other components of language. Most importantly, study of these regular lexical patterns can contribute significantly to knowledge of the processes and capacities which underlie human language and culture.” The relation between synchronic variation and diachronic change is also discussed in Sweetser (1990:3) and Lüdtke (1985:357).

³⁰⁷ The fact that one of the meanings of the Latin word *colere* is ‘to inhabit’ has been used to argue that the word *culture* naturally forms part of the legitimization rhetoric of colonialism, i.e., *culture* implies ‘colonization’ (Young 1995). As tempting as such an explanation might seem, it operates more at the level of ‘just-so’ folk etymology than rigorous linguistic analysis. While Latin *colere* could in fact mean ‘to inhabit,’ the English word *culture* does not have (and there is no evidence that it has ever had) such a meaning.

cultura was also used in meaning (I.1.a).³⁰⁸ However, the more immediate source of Modern English *culture* in sense (I.1.a) can be seen in the 12th century Anglo-Norman uses of the word to refer to husbandry and the action of cultivating the soil. (*OED*) According to the *OED*, this meaning of *culture* in Modern English is attested from the mid-15th century to the present day:

- (I.1.a.i) In places there thou wilt have the **culture**. (tr. Palladius *De Re Rustica* (Bodl. Add.) i. 21; **c1450**)³⁰⁹
(I.1.a.ii) The **culture** of the earth had been one of his constant joys. (*Syracuse (N.Y.) Herald Jrnl.* 7 Mar. 25/6; **1976**)³¹⁰

In these examples the word *culture* is used to mean ‘cultivating the soil’ (I.1.a) and thus retains the concrete meaning of ‘growing’ or ‘cultivating the soil’ of the Latin word *cultura*.³¹¹ The word *culture* was frequently used in this manner from the 15th to the middle of the 20th century, but it is now beginning to be replaced by the word *cultivation* (e.g., cultivation of the soil). It is thus highly likely that older locutions such as the ‘culture of the soil’ will soon become obsolete.³¹² In contrast, nominal compound expressions in which the modifying noun specifies the crop (e.g., *flax culture*) or the method of cultivation (e.g., *drip culture*) seem more resilient.

³⁰⁸ A complete study of lexicalized metaculture in 19th century English would include a number of terms beyond the word *culture*, e.g. *civilization*, *custom*, *tradition*, etc. However, such a study would vastly exceed the scope of this dissertation.

³⁰⁹ Not surprisingly many early attestations of the word *culture* in this meaning are found in translations of Latin texts.

³¹⁰ Since a complete study the term *culture* vastly exceeds the scope of this chapter, I limit myself to the attested examples provided by the latest edition of the *OED*. Since the stated goal of the *OED* is to trace the various meanings and uses of words from their earliest to latest attestations (Murray 1888:vi), using this data is at least a good approximation of the temporal distribution of the various meanings of this word. This does not mean that I assume that the dates of attestation indicated in the *OED* correspond exactly to the emergence of certain word uses in the English language. The *OED* itself makes no such claim to accuracy. In other words, due to accidental gaps in the existing textual corpus or oversights by *OED* compilers, it is entirely possible (and indeed highly likely) that certain uses of a word emerged earlier than the earliest attested instances. Nevertheless, to the best of my knowledge, no better chronological mapping of the word *culture* has been provided elsewhere.

³¹¹ The examples are numbered to indicate the different meanings of *culture* in Figure 12. The concluding small case roman numerals “i” and “ii” are added to indicate the first and last attestations, respectively.

³¹² Indeed, the most recent use of *culture* in this meaning listed in the *OED* occurs in an explicit discussion of the etymology of the word:

The examples in (I.2.a.i-ii) below show that the use of the word *culture* to refer to the ‘cultivating or rearing of plants and crops’ (I.2.a)—as opposed to the ‘cultivation of *land*’ in the examples in (I.1.a.i-ii) above—is attested from the late 16th century to the present day.

(I.2.a.i) The wilde Uyne differeth in nothings from the Gardein vyne, but onely in **Cultures**. (T. Newton *Approoued Med.* f. 63; **1580**)

(I.2.a.ii) The Albariza soil [...] is favoured locally for the **culture** of grapes for lighter sherries. (*Mail on Sunday* (Nexis) 21 Feb. (Live section) 39; **2006**)

Again, as with meaning (I.1.a) above, *culture* in meaning (I.2.a) is now increasingly being supplanted by the word *cultivation*.

The use of the word *culture* to refer to ‘the raising of animals’ or ‘production of animal products’ (I.2.b) is attested from the middle of the 18th century and continues to be in use today in expressions such as *bee culture*, *mussel culture*, etc.³¹³ With the advent of the study of microorganisms in the late 19th century, meaning (I.2.b) (‘raising of animals’) was extended to include the ‘growing of microorganisms’ (I.3.a), as exemplified in expressions such as *cell culture*, *bacteria culture*, etc.³¹⁴ In turn, with the emergence of (I.3.a), the word *culture* also began to be used to refer to a ‘crop of artificially grown microorganisms’ (I.3.b).³¹⁵

-
- (i) Agriculture, after all, means not food production, but ‘the **culture** of the soil’. (*Policy Rev.* (Nexis) 1 Apr. 63; **2000**)

If the word *culture* in this meaning is only found in etymological definitions of this kind, this is a sure indication that it is on its way to becoming obsolete.

³¹³ The *OED* gives the following examples which illustrate early and contemporary uses respectively:

(I.2.b.i) The care and **culture** of Bees have always been one of the most agreeable and useful employments of country life. (tr. G. A. Bazin *Nat. Hist. Bees* sig. A2; **1744**)

(I.2.b.ii) There is no satisfactory alternative within the Wash area where such mussel **culture** can be carried on with. (*Eastern Daily Press* (Nexis) 28 June; **2006**)

³¹⁴ The *OED* gives the following examples which illustrate early and contemporary uses respectively:

(I.3.a.i) Cohn, in order [...] to get rid of the moulds, [...] employed the following **culture**-fluid [Fr. *liquide nourricier*]. (G. M. Sternberg tr. A. Magnin *Bacteria* ii. i. 113; **1880**)

(I.3.a.ii) You'll be supervising the cell **culture** of hybridoma cells and the preparation of harvests for the purification team. (*New Scientist* 11 Jan. 51 (*advt.*); **2003**)

³¹⁵ The *OED* gives the following examples which illustrate early and contemporary uses respectively:

In sum, although there is a considerable difference in meaning between the various uses of *culture* illustrated in the examples above, they are all ultimately derived from the basic meaning of ‘growing,’ ‘cultivating’ or ‘raising’ in the concrete sense of human actions aimed at assisting the biological process of organic growth of organisms ranging from plants and crops, to animals (and their products), and finally to microorganisms.

Now let us turn to some of the more abstract concepts referred to by the word *culture* which can also be shown to have evolved from the basic prototypical sense of ‘growing’ or ‘cultivating’ through general lexical processes of extension and abstraction. The meanings (II.4.a), (II.4.b) and (II.4.c) can all be analyzed as extensions of the concrete meaning of ‘growing (a biological organism)’ to the ‘cultivation’ of the human mind and body as well as the various ‘arts.’ The use of *culture* to refer to the ‘development of the mental faculties and behavior through training and education’ (II.4.a) first occurs in Modern English in early 16th century translations of the corresponding Latin expression *animi cultum*³¹⁶:

- (II4a.i) To the **culture** & proffit of their myndis [L. *animi cultum*]. (T. More tr. G. F. Pico della Mirandola *Let.* in tr. *Lyfe J. Picus* sig. d.iii; ?1510)
- (II4a.ii) I used to think houses in the country were for saints or fools. [...] But they ate fortunes, ruined marriages and dulled the **culture** of the mind. (*Times* (Nexis) 29 Jan.; 1999)

(I.3b.i) The **cultures** of the parasite [Fr. *les cultures du parasite*] are necessarily made in contact with the air, for our virus is an aerobe being, whose development is not possible without it. (tr. L. Pasteur in *Lancet* 6 Nov. 751/2; 1880)

(I.3b.ii) Whole or skimmed milk is fermented with a ‘starter **culture**’ of bacteria, usually *Streptococcus thermophilus* and *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*. (J. Elkington & J. Hailes *New Foods Guide* iv. 158; 1999)

³¹⁶ Such abstract uses of *cultura* can already be found in Classical Latin, e.g. Cicero: *Cultura animi*. Cicero also uses the expression *mentis* ‘(lit.) the culture of the mind’ (Bagby 1959:73). That is, the extension of the concrete meanings (I) to the more abstract meaning (II.4a) was also found in Latin. It is also attested in Anglo-Norman from the 13th century (*OED*). Thus rather than taking place for the first time in English, this semantic extension already took place in Anglo-Norman and Latin.

Although this use of *culture* is still occasionally attested, it is now increasingly replaced by the word *cultivation*. Thus what James Legge (1861) referred to as *self culture* is now usually called *self-cultivation*.³¹⁷

The use of the word *culture* to refer to the ‘training of the human body’ (II.4.b) is only attested from the mid-16th century onwards.³¹⁸

(II4b.i) Amongst whom [*sc.* the Lacedaemonians] [...] especially in the **culture** of their bodies, the nobility observed the most equality with the commons. (T. Hobbes tr. Thucydides *Peloponnesian War* i. vi; **1628**)

(II4b.ii) Vittorino, like a true humanist, emphasized the **culture** of the body no less than that of the mind. (*Brit. Jnl. Educ. Stud.* **13** 207; **1965**)

This use of the word *culture* is rare and has probably already become obsolete in the language of most speakers of American English younger than retirement age. Interestingly, unlike (I.4.a) this use of *culture* does not seem to be replaced by *cultivation* (notice the somewhat awkward flavor of the expression *cultivation of the body*), but rather by words such as *training* or *improvement*.

The extended use of *culture* to refer to ‘the development of one’s knowledge of a subject or pursuit’ (II.4.c) is attested from the late 17th century.

(II4c.i) Not he whose rich and fertile mind Is by the **Culture** of the Arts refin'd. (J. Norris *Coll. Misc.* 72 ; **1672**)

(II4c.ii) David [...] has eschewed his father's old-fashioned humanist **culture** of the arts for fast-lane industrial power and money. (P. Davis *Experience of Reading* 149; **1992**)

Although not declared obsolete by the *OED*, this use of *culture* is probably no longer part of the vocabulary of most contemporary speakers of English. However, since it is getting close to the

³¹⁷ See the discussion of the phrase *self culture* as used by Legge (1861) in section 5.4.

³¹⁸ According to the *OED* the word *cultura* was also used in this sense in Latin as early as the 5th century CE. Thus while it could be due to an independent development in English, this extended use of the word *culture* could also have been influenced by Latin, the use of which as a language of learning was still widespread in 16th century Europe.

definition of metacultural concepts given in chapter 1, it is nevertheless an important link in the chain of meanings that connects non-metacultural and metacultural uses of the term *culture*. Having mapped the evolution of the different non-metacultural uses of culture it is now time to turn to the development of the metacultural uses.

5.2.1 Legitimizing empire: *culture* as ‘high culture’ of the civilized world

As mentioned above, for purposes of this study I will divide the metacultural concepts referred to by the term *culture* into two groups centered around: (i) the notion of ‘high culture’ as the highest representative of the values and practices of human civilization (often associated with an empire which is thought to represent the pinnacle of human development), and (ii) the anthropological notion of ‘culture’ as the set of conventionalized behaviors of a group of people located in a particular place and time.

Let us first turn to the notion of ‘high culture’ (II.5), which, as observed by the *OED*, can be analyzed as derived from an elliptical use of (I.4.a). That is, it is by ‘having one’s mind and behavior cultured and refined’ that one may eventually end up as someone who *has* ‘(high) culture.’ According to the *OED* the first occurrence of this use of *culture* is from the late 17th century.

(II.5.i) We may observe it growing with Age, waxing bigger and stronger together with the encrease of wit and knowledge, of civil **culture** and experience; [...] that it prevails most in civilized nations. (Barrow and Loggan (1679:120); **a1677**)³¹⁹

³¹⁹ As discussed in section 5.4, Legge (1861:308-309) also uses the expression *civil culture* to translate *wén* in *LY* 16.1.

Note that the expression *civil culture* used in example (II5.i) is also found in Legge (Legge 1861) in much the same meaning, i.e., referring to the manners and conventionalized behaviors of educated gentlemen. The use of the word *culture* as a mass noun to refer to the “intellectual and artistic conditions of a society or the (perceived) state of development of those conditions” (*OED*), does not develop until the end of the 18th century. According to Young (1995:33-34), Henry James Pye’s use of the word *culture* in his poem *The Progress of Refinement* from 1783 retains the original connotations to agriculture and growing while at the same time referring to a more abstract concept of ‘culture’ as a particular refined state of ‘intellectual development.’

(II5.ii) The Sable African no **culture** boasts,
Fierce as his sun, and ruthless as his coasts;
And where the immeasurable forests spread
Beyond the extent of Ocean’s Western bed,
Unsocial, uninform’d, the tawney race
Range the drear wild, and urge the incessant chase. (Pye 1787:170)³²⁰

Although the term *culture* was used metaculturally to refer to ‘refined, high culture’ in the 18th century, it was not until the second half of the 19th century that it became a frequently used term in the general vocabulary of the literate population. Matthew Arnold’s (1822-1888) writing played a key role in the popularization of the use of term *culture* understood as the refinement of the “mind, tastes, and manners” (*OED*) through “acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world” (Arnold 1873).³²¹ In the full passage in Arnold (1873)

³²⁰ On this passage, Young (1995:187n12) observes, “Although the reference to the absence of culture clearly includes agriculture, it also involves learning, social institutions and a holistic notion of society; at I, 53-5, Pye uses culture in its older, agricultural sense.”

³²¹ The full context of this quotation is as follows: “And this aim we cannot seek without coming in sight of another aim, too, which we have often and often pointed out, and tried to recommend: *culture*: acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world, and thus with the history of the human spirit. [...] the lack of culture disposes *the people* to conclude at once, from and imperfection or fallibility in the Bible, that it is a priestly imposture. To a large extent, this is the fault, not of the people’s want of culture, but of the priests [...]”(Arnold 1873:xi)

Arnold's concept of 'culture' is mentioned as something that can be an 'aim' and something that people can both 'want' and 'lack.' Elsewhere Arnold also defines *culture* as "a study of perfection, [...] and perfection which insists on becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances" (Arnold 1869:14).³²² Thus the final result of 19th century *self culture* is not merely the "refinement of mind, taste, and manners," but also their *perfection*.³²³ By extension, the term *culture* also refers to the "the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively." In other words, Arnold places his notion of 'culture' at the very top of the value scale as the best of what human civilization has to offer, and the ideal to which all humans (regardless of whatever local customs they may live by) should aim.

Gaining ground in the heyday of the British empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the term *culture* in the Arnoldian sense of 'civilization' or 'high culture' has obvious connections to the worldview and values attached to the colonial experience, which inspired the construction of a flattering British self-identity as the carriers of universal 'civilization' in contrast to the 'barbarian' others:

According to the *OED* the word *culture* is used in the meaning "refinement of mind, taste, and manners; artistic and intellectual development" (II.5), in several works from the 17th to the 18th centuries. In addition to the example in (II.5.i), the *OED* also lists the following attestations:

- (i) We may observe it growing with Age, waxing bigger and stronger together with the encrease of wit and knowledge, of **civil culture** and experience. (I. Barrow *Serm. Several Occasions* (1678) iv. 120, **a1677**)
- (ii) Men of any tolerable **Culture** and Civility must abhor the entering into any such Compact [L. *unde & abhorret à consuetudine hominum cultiorum tale pactum inire*]. (tr. S. von Pufendorf *Law of Nature & Nations* ii. ii. 91/1, **1703**)
- (iii) As no images can with propriety be taken from **culture** or civil society in the dialogues, I am under the necessity of frequently repeating the most striking objects of nature. (S. W. Morton *Ouâbi* iv. 42 , **1790**)
- (iv) Where grace of **culture** hath been utterly unknown. (Wordsworth *Prelude* (1959) xii. 466, **a1807**)
- (v) It seems to me that the circumstances of man are historically somewhat better here and now than ever,—that more freedom exists for **Culture**. (R. W. Emerson *Jrnl.* 24 Nov. (1910) IV. 371, **1837**)

³²² Storey (1998:22-28) contains a useful discussion of the Arnoldian concept of 'culture.' As observed by Storey (1998:23), Arnold uses the term *culture* to refer to four different things: "(1) the ability to know what is best; (2) what is best; (3) the mental and spiritual application of what is best, and (4) the pursuit of what is best."

³²³ The 19th century expression *self culture* would be written *self-culture* with a hyphen according to present-day orthographic standards. Here I keep the unhyphenated spelling found in mid-19th century texts such as Legge (1861).

(II5.iii) As Roman imperialism laid the foundations of modern civilization, and led the wild barbarians of these islands along the path of progress, so in Africa today we are repaying the debt, and bringing to the dark place of the earth, the abode of barbarism and cruelty, the torch of **culture** and progress, while ministering to the material needs of our own civilization. [...] We hold these countries because it is the genius of our race to colonise, to trade and to govern. (Lugard 1922:618-9)

This brief passage from Lugard (1922) succinctly illustrates some of the factors involved in the emergence of lexicalized metaculture in the hegemonic imperial worldview of Britain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.³²⁴

The passages from Arnold, Lugard and Pye discussed here illustrate some of the factors that contributed to the lexicalization of metacultural conceptualization of the Western tradition, from Greece and Rome to the British empire as the only truly valid ‘culture.’ First, the “torch of culture” is used in the legitimization rhetoric of Empire-building. The British are justified in colonizing the “dark place[s] of the earth” because they bring with them the ‘sweetness and light’ of ‘culture’—to use a phrase from Mathew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*—which will spread order and ‘civilization’ among the colonized.

Second, the encounter with the “wild barbarians” in the civilizing mission of colonization serves as fertile ground for the construction of identities of both self and other. Here the tendency is for the description of the unpalatable customs of uncivilized “barbarians” to serve as a foil for the construction of the educated British as the embodiment of perfected culture and civilization.

Third, while the distinction between barbarism and civilization is clearly intertwined with ideas of cultural differences, social stratification also plays an important role. Thus, in Arnold’s cultural ‘universalism,’ the uncouth behavior of the groups at the bottom of the social hierarchy

³²⁴ See Dirks (1992) for a useful collection of articles on the concept of ‘culture’ in the context of colonialism. See also section 4.8 in chapter 4 for a discussion of the role played by the emergence of the concept and discourse of ‘empire’ (*tiānxià* 天下) in the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* in the Zhànguó period.

of British society makes them on a par with the savages and barbarians in Africa, India and China.

Fourth, self-proclaimed conservative thinkers such as Arnold, among others³²⁵, who are responsible for making the word *culture* part of everyday English, all share a concern with protecting and preserving what they perceived to be the ‘true’ cultural knowledge and traditions of an ideal harmonious society of the past. That is, as observed by Tomlinson (2009), consternation over a real or imagined crisis of traditional values and mores, consisting of a (perceived) loss of the tradition of an idealized golden age, seems to be a common factor involved in the emergence of lexicalized metaculture.

Fifth, in order for lexicalized metaculture to emerge, a group of individuals with an interest in producing metacultural discourse must be in place. Furthermore, these self-proclaimed custodians of the ways of the golden age naturally tend to have a vested interest in marketing their cultural capital as a means to achieve power, influence and wealth.³²⁶ In the European context, the rise of the bourgeoisie in the wake of the overthrow of absolutism and the onset of the Industrial Revolution all contributed to the emergence and strengthening of a group of financially independent thinkers such as Matthew Arnold, who supported himself as a school inspector. That is, in the mid- to late 19th century, this group of independent agents and the concomitant economy of cultural capital had already long been in existence. As discussed in chapter 4, structurally similar factors emerged in a very different socio-political context in the Zhànguó period and contributed to the emergence of lexicalized metaculture in the texts from that period.

³²⁵ In addition to Arnold, T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) was another important conservative thinker and writer whose book *Christianity and culture: The idea of a Christian society and Notes towards the definition of culture* (1968 [1939]) played an important role in the popularization of the term *culture*.

³²⁶ I am using the concept of cultural capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu, see Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1979) and Bourdieu (1986).

As discussed in chapter 4, although the British empire and the incipient imperial ideology of the Zhànguó period are obviously highly incommensurable entities, at a sufficiently abstract level, a number of interesting parallels may nevertheless be observed in the emergence and evolution of certain forms of lexicalized metaculture in the formation of a discourse and ideology of empire-building.³²⁷

5.2.2 Culture, identity and the idea of the nation: the anthropological concept of ‘culture’ as ‘complex whole’ sui generis

While the universal/imperial notion of ‘high culture’ was the dominant metacultural concept referred to by the term *culture* in the 19th century, the national/particular notion of ‘culture’ came to dominate the use of the word *culture* in the 20th century. With the emergence and development of a relativistic definition of ‘culture’ as a meaningful complex whole giving value and meaning to various aspects of human existence in a specific geographical region at a particular time in history, we move from the era of **Culture** in the singular to the age of **cultureS** in the plural. In contrast to the universal/imperial notion of ‘high culture,’ which can be argued to share some similarities with certain metacultural uses of pre-Qín *wén*, the anthropological notion of multiple cultures is one that did not exist in pre-Qín texts.³²⁸ The *OED* lists the example in (II6a.i) as the first attested use of *culture* in this meaning.

(II6a.i) And this Egyptian or Chamitic civilization, too, preceded by many centuries the Shemitic or Aryan **cultures**. (De Gurowski (1860:6-7); **1860**)

³²⁷ For discussion of the incipient ideology of ‘empire’ in pre-Qín China, see Pines (2009).

³²⁸ As briefly discussed in chapter 1, *sú* 俗 ‘custom’ was the metacultural term most often used in pre-Qín texts to discuss the conventionalized behaviors of non-Zhou peoples, or non-elite Zhu practices. However, its meaning is more similar to the English word ‘custom’ in that it refers to particular practices rather than to a whole system of conventionalized behaviors. The language of pre-Qín texts thus seems to have lacked a lexicalized term to refer to what I refer to here as the the anthropological or the national/particular notion of ‘culture’ concept of multiple cultures. Not surprisingly, this concept itself also seems to be absent from pre-Qín texts.

However, as discussed below, the intellectual roots of this concept of ‘culture’ can be traced back to German and French intellectual traditions from the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. Thus, there are several main sources of inspiration for this new notion of ‘culture’: (i) the notion of *Kultur* as defined in early German nationalism and in Herder’s *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*] (1784-91) which linked different geographically bounded spaces (the nation state, as well as both smaller and larger entities) to specific groups of people and ‘cultures’³²⁹; and (ii) the notion of the animal body as an interdependent system (‘un système où toutes les parties se tiennent’) in Cuvier’s comparative anatomy, which later served as the inspiration for the structuralist view of languages and cultures as complex autonomous semiotic systems defined by negative internal meaning oppositions.³³⁰

Herder was one of the first scholars to use the German word *Kultur* to refer to the way of life of a specific group of people (Young 1995:42). As illustrated by the following passage from Herder’s introduction to his *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* from 1784-91, the word *Cultur* (which is now spelled *Kultur*) could refer both to ‘a particular way of life’ and to ‘refined high culture.’

[...] und doch war mir es nie eingefallen, mit den wenigen allegorischen Worten, Kindheit, Jugend, das männliche, das hohe Alter unseres Geschlechts, deren Verfolg nur auf wenige Völker der Erde angewandt und anwendbar war, eine Heerstraße auszuzeichnen, auf der man auch nur die Geschichte der **Cultur**, geschweige die Philosophie der ganzen Menschengeschichte mit sicherm Fuß ausmessen könnte. Welches Volk der Erde ists, das nicht einige **Cultur** habe? und wie sehr käme der Plan der Vorsehung zu kurz, wenn zu dem, was Wir **Cultur** nennen und oft

³²⁹ See Herder (1800). See also Barnard’s preface to Herder and Barnard (1969), which includes an insightful discussion of Herder’s various uses of the term *culture*.

³³⁰ For a study of the importance the notion of a ‘self-contained complex whole’ (‘un système où toutes les parties se tiennent’) in Cuvier’s theory of comparative anatomy and the role that this notion played as a source of inspiration for the idea of a system as a complex whole in structuralist theories of linguistics and sociology, see Baxter (2002).

nur verfeinte Schwachheit nennen sollten, jedes Individuum des Menschengeschlechts geschaffen wäre? Nichts ist unbestimmter als dieses Wort und nichts ist trüglicher als die Anwendung desselben auf ganze Völker und Zeiten. Wie wenige sind in einem **cultivierten** Volk **cultiviert**? und worin ist dieser Vorzug zu setzen? (Herder 1841:v-vii)

[...] and yet it had never occurred to me—through the few figurative words, childhood, youth, manhood, and old age of our species, the chronological order of which was applied (and applicable) only to a few of the peoples of the Earth—to map out a highway, on which one could trace with certainty the history of **culture**, to say nothing of the philosophy the entire human history. What people on earth exists which does not have some **culture**? And how much would not the plan of Providence fall short if every individual of the human species had been created to that which we call **culture** and which we ought to call but refined weakness? Nothing is less vague than this word and nothing is more deceptive than its application to entire peoples and time periods. How few people are **cultivated** in a **cultivated** people? And wherein lies their excellence?

Herder's association of individual peoples (*Volk*) with distinct 'ways of life' (*Cultur*) and their distinct 'national spirits' (*Volksgeist*) soon became one of the cornerstones of German nationalism. Long before Germany was unified as a modern nation-state with the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, ideas of a German 'cultural unity' were already floating around.³³¹ In the context of this type of 'cultural' justification for political unification, "[e]mphasis was placed on national, traditional cultures, natural language rather than artificial rhetoric, and popular culture rather than the high culture of civilization." (Young 1995:42). Thus, in an "anthropological spirit of objectivity," Herder "advocates the use of the word 'culture' in the plural (thus anticipating its more relativistic anthropological sense) to denote the diversity of cultures both between and within nations." In spite of the egalitarian flavor of his discussion of multiple cultures, Herder nevertheless assumed that each culture could be evaluated on a "hierarchical scale of civilization." (Young 1995:40-41).³³²

³³¹ Similarly, as discussed in chapter 4, the pre-Qín idea of a unified realm (*tiānxià*) preceded the Qin unification of the 'Central States' (*Zhōngguó*) into a single political entity, see also Pines (Pines 2009).

³³² "It was only at the end of the [19th] century, when the civilization project itself had become so identified with colonialism and the project of imperialism, and could no longer be used in its relativistic comparative sense, that liberal anthropology sought to discriminate between culture and civilization, and to use the former to describe the 'savage' and 'barbarian' cultures that civilization had come to destroy. To be able to do that, however, 'culture' itself had to be appropriated not only from its German nationalist context, but also from that of the most racist school of nineteenth-century anthropology." (Young 1995:43)

Since Herder used the German word *Cultur* in meanings that the English word *culture* had not yet acquired in common usage, it was often translated into English as either *cultivation* or *civilization* by early 19th century translators.³³³ Thus T.O. Churchill's translation from 1803 renders the word *Cultur* from the passage quoted above as *cultivation*.³³⁴ However, over the course of the 19th century, the English word *culture* slowly but steadily acquired the meanings that Herder associates with the German word *Kultur*. And with the proliferation of meanings and uses, the word *culture* also became used more and more frequently.

Herder's idea of a particular 'culture' as the set of beliefs and practices of the people of a specific place and time exercised considerable influence on English thinkers such as John Stuart Mill (1806 - 1873), who in his *Essay on Coleridge* "identified 'the philosophy of human culture' with the history and 'the character of the national education' that makes a nation" (Young 1995:43):

The **culture** of the human being had been carried to no ordinary height, and human nature had exhibited many of its noblest manifestations, not in Christian countries only, but in the ancient world, in Athens, Sparta, Rome; nay, even barbarians, as the Germans, or still more unmitigated savages, the wild Indians, or again the Chinese, the Egyptians, the Arabs, all had their own education, their own **culture**; a **culture** which, whatever might be its tendency upon the whole, had been successful in some respect or other. Every form of polity, every condition of society, whatever else it had done, had formed its type of national character. (Mill 1983:132, bold fonts added)

³³³ Young (1995:37) also observed that Herder's use of the word *Kultur*, was "variously translated into English in 1800 as 'cultivation' and 'civilization.'"

³³⁴ Churchill (1803) translates the entire passage by Herder quoted above as follows:

It had never entered into my mind, by employing the few figurative expressions, the *childhood, infancy, manhood, and old age* of our species, the chain of which was applied, as it was applicable, only to a few nations, to point out a highway, on which the *history of cultivation*, to say nothing of the *philosophy of history at large*, could be traced with certainty. Is there a people upon earth totally **uncultivated**? and how contracted must the scheme of Providence be, if every individual of the human species were to be formed to what *we* call **cultivation**, for which refined weakness would often be a more appropriate term? Nothing can be more vague, than the term itself; nothing more apt to lead us astray, than the application of it to whole nations and ages. Among a **cultivated** people, what is the number of those who deserve this name? in what is their preeminence to be placed? (Herder and Churchill 1803:vi-vii)

As illustrated by this passage by Mill, Herder's idea of a "hierarchical scale of civilization" against which the cultures of different peoples can be evaluated was highly influential in 19th century Britain. In this framework, the older use of the word *culture*—to refer to the training of the physical body and the education of the mind—was extended to refer to the evolution from primitive societies to more advanced or 'civilized' forms of 'culture' (Young 1995:43-44). The powerful idea that each politically autonomous nation has its own 'culture' can thus be identified as an important source of inspiration for the notion of a 'culture' as the 'complex whole,' comprising the totality of material and spiritual expressions of the people of a particular place and time.

The second (somewhat later) main source of inspiration for the idea of bounded 'wholeness' as applied to the notion of 'culture' was floating around amongst theoreticians of other disciplines in the late 19th century, e.g., Durkheim in sociology and F. de Saussure in linguistics.³³⁵ As observed by Baxter (2002), the Saussurian idea of language as a closed system of negative meaning generating opposites can be traced back to the conception of the animal body as an interdependent system ('un système où toutes les parties se tiennent') in Cuvier's theories of comparative anatomy. While a precursor of the use of the term *culture* in this new sense appears in Tylor's (1871) *Primitive Culture*, it did not gain currency beyond narrow academic circles until the publication of popular introductions to the anthropological study of cultures and languages by Boas, Benedict and Mead, among others, in the early 20th century. According to Mead (1959) and Masuzawa (1998), Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (1934) and *The chrysanthemum and the sword: Patterns of Japanese culture* (1946) played a significant role in making the word *culture* in the anthropological sense part of the vocabulary of the average

³³⁵ See also Herbert (1991) for a book length treatment of the 19th century antecedents to the anthropological concept of 'culture' which contains useful discussion of the limitations and inherent paradoxes of the notion of *culture* as a complex whole.

educated person. The fact that Benedict (1946) was written during the height of World War II as an attempt to understand the inscrutable behavior of the Japanese enemy probably also helps explain the popularity of the book. Thus, with the development of the disciplines of linguistics, sociology, anthropology, archaeological, etc. in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the structuralist notion of *culture* defined as a ‘complex whole’ slowly gained currency in scholarly circles until the works by Franz Boas (1858-1942), Ruth Benedict (1887-1948) and Margaret Mead (1901-1978) secured its position in the common vocabulary of “educated people” from the 1930s onwards.

After entering the common language, the anthropological concept of ‘culture’ as the ‘set of conventionalized behaviors of a specific group of individuals at a certain time and place’ in turn became the source of a number of derived uses that differ mainly in the composition and scope of the ‘group of individuals.’ Such derived uses of *culture* to refer to ‘a way of life or social environment characterized by or associated with the specified quality or thing, or a group of people subscribing or belonging to this’ (II.6.b.) are largely a product of the 20th century.

- (II6b.i) Truly she comes from the very core of corset **culture**, Austria; but really, when she speaks of 7 and 8-inch waists, one needs must in politeness suspect a printer's error. (*New Fun* 5 Oct.; **1912**)
- (II6b.ii) This is his tenth attempt to join the jogging **culture**. This latest outfit will do the trick. (C. Whitehead *Colossus of N.Y.* 42; **2003**)³³⁶

Finally, the *OED* also lists the specialized meaning ‘the philosophy, practices, and attitudes of an institution, business, or other organization’ (II.6.c) in which the scope of the ‘group of individuals’ is bound by a term referring to an organization or institution.

³³⁶ Other examples of this use of *culture* include *warrior culture*, *beer-parlor culture*, and *gun culture*, etc.

- (II6c.i) We may use the term *prisonization* to indicate the taking on in greater or less degree of the folkways, mores, customs, and general **culture** of the penitentiary. (Clemmer (1940) xii. 299; **1940**)
- (II6c.ii) Smart corporations have realised that fast growth and high profitability is best created through unique intellectual property and unique organisational **cultures**. (*Business Rev. Weekly* 30 Sept. 63/1; **2004**)

To this we may add a few more recent uses of *culture*. First, expressions such as *culture of complacency* or *culture of corruption* are now often found in newspaper articles on business corporations and trades.³³⁷ Since they also tend to be bounded by a term specifying the scope of the group of individuals to which they apply, these uses of *culture* can be analyzed as semantic specializations of (II.6.c). In this new watered down sense, the term *culture* can be used to refer to almost any aspect of collectively shared behavior, be it good or bad.

Second, as a derivative of (II.6.a), *culture* can now be used to refer to the producers of ‘culture’ and their output. This is the sense usually intended in governments which have a ‘ministry of culture’ set up to deal with protection of national relics, supporting artists and the study of the art as well as sponsoring the national opera, museums, and even national monuments.³³⁸

Third, another important semantic specialization of (II.6.a) is the use of *culture* to refer to the material remnants of an ancient people. Thus archaeologists often refer to the uniform patterns on artifacts, burial practices, architectural style, etc. as this or that ‘culture.’

Finally, in addition to variations in the scope of the group of individuals, variation in the nature of the ‘individuals’ has also led to a number of specialized meanings derived from (II.6.a).

³³⁷ For a brief discussion of these watered-down use of the word *culture* in phrases, such as *corporate culture*, *culture of corruption*, etc., and other recent uses of the term *culture*, see also Bennett et al. (2005).

³³⁸ In English speaking countries, ‘ministries of culture’ appear to be an institutional innovation of the 1990s. In New Zealand, the *Ministry of Cultural Affairs*, was established in 1991, and in 2000 it was supplanted by the *Ministry for Culture and Heritage*. Australia has referred to similar institutions as various *Ministries of the Arts* from 1971 to the present day. In the UK the office of *Secretary of State for National Heritage* was created in 1992 and renamed the *Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport* in 1997.

In the 19th century Arnoldian use of the term *culture*, the relevant group of individuals seems to have been implicitly limited to able-bodied, adult, financially independent males educated in the ‘correct culture’ of the best of what Western civilization has to offer. The term thus excluded uneducated British as well as the uncivilized ‘savages’ and barbarians. Also excluded were women, the physically and mentally handicapped, children and animals. In other words, Arnold’s concept of ‘culture’ was reserved for the white ‘man of culture.’³³⁹ Over the course of the 20th century, the concept of ‘culture’ was increasingly democratized in that more and more formerly excluded groups were granted the status of ‘individuals’ who could partake in ‘culture.’ Today women, blacks, the handicapped and children have all been included, and they all even have their own ‘cultures.’ In recent theories of animal psychology, ‘culture’ is no longer the exclusive prerogative of human beings, but is even being used to describe the conventionalized behavior patterns of other social animals. Thus in a *New York Times* article by Natalie Angier from December 13, 2010, a researcher is quoted as saying that musk oxen have culture:

(II.7) There’s evidence that they have an elephantlike social structure, and even some form of **culture**. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/14/science/14angier.html?hpw>)³⁴⁰

Since this use of *culture* appears to be derived directly from (II.6.a), we may add it as (II.7) to the list of meanings of *culture* in Figure 12.

Part of the explanation of the current ubiquity of the term *culture* both in colloquial usage and in academic articles can thus be found in this ‘democratization’ of the scope and nature of the group of ‘individuals’ who qualifies for ‘culture.’ Further adding to the inflation of the term

³³⁹ The phrase ‘man of culture’ was commonly used in the late 19th century and even made its way into translations of the *Lúnyǔ*. See the discussion of Gū Hóngmíng’s translation of 好學 *hào xué* as “real man of culture” (Gu 1898:85) in LY 11.7 and a “man of culture” (Gu 1898:170) in LY 19.5 in section 5.4 below.

³⁴⁰ As indicated by the title of Wrangham (1994) *Chimpanzee cultures*, some animal species such as chimpanzees are even considered capable of having different “cultures.”

is the fact that the value scale attached to the Arnoldian concept of ‘culture,’ which only referred to (perceived) ideal or perfect values and behaviors, has disappeared from certain recent uses of *culture*, e.g., expressions such as *culture of corruption* in which culture refers to a pervasive institutional atmosphere.

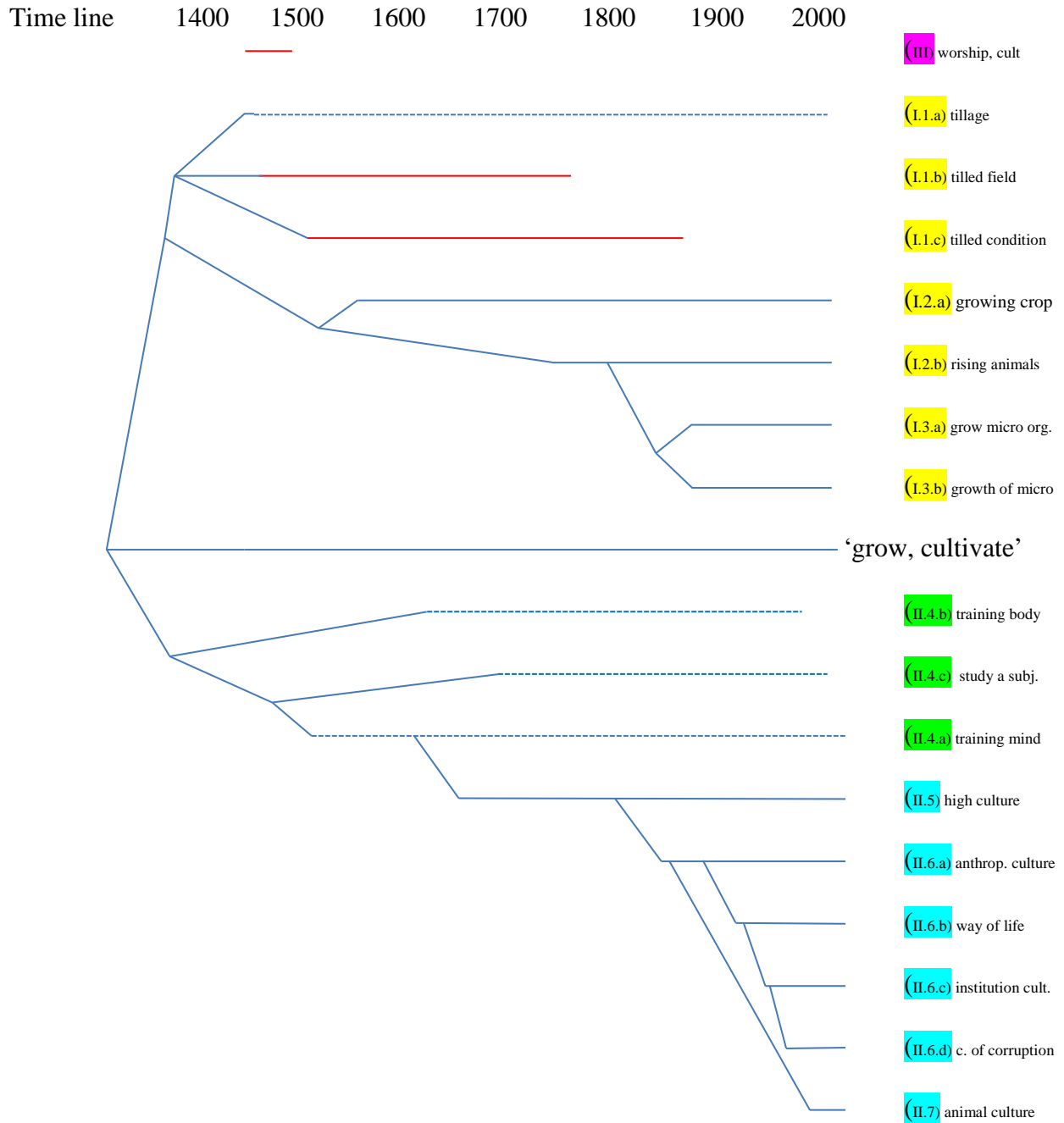
(II.6.d) Here, finally, was an insider acknowledging the enveloping **culture** of corruption in Russia’s police forces. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/28/world/europe/28russia.html?ref=abovethelaw>)

Since this use of *culture* appears to be derived from (II.6.c), we may add it as (II.6.d) to the list of meanings of *culture* in Figure 12.

5.2.3 Summary: understanding the synchronic polysemy of the term *culture* through diachronic variation

The brief survey of the history of the word *culture* presented above neatly illustrates that a deeper understanding of the complexities of synchronic polysemy can be obtained through a diachronic study that traces the origins of various word meanings and uses. Starting out as a loan word from Latin with such concrete meanings as ‘growing’ and ‘cultivating,’ the word *culture* developed into a highly complex polysemous word used to refer to a bewildering number of popular and theoretical metacultural concepts. While not ignoring the risk of oversimplifying the complexities involved, we can map the chronological development of the various meanings given to the word *culture* over the last five centuries as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Diachronic lexical semantic mapping the polysemous word *culture*.³⁴¹



Each of the 18 horizontal lines in Figure 13 represent a separate meaning gloss in the entry for *culture* in the 2003 online edition of the *OED*. Line length indicates the time period for which

³⁴¹ The diachronic lexical semantic mapping of the polysemy of *culture* in Figure 13 is inspired by Geeraert's (1997:47-62) mapping of the semantic evolution of Dutch verb *vergrijpen*.

each particular meaning is attested. Red color has been used to highlight meanings that the *OED* have declared to be obsolete.³⁴² These three obsolete meanings, which were not included in Figure 12, are (I.1.b) ‘a piece of tilled land; a cultivated field;’³⁴³ (I.1.c) ‘cultivated condition;’³⁴⁴ and (III) ‘worship; reverential homage.’³⁴⁵ Dotted lines are used for meanings that are not marked as obsolete in the *OED* but, as discussed above, nevertheless appear to be on the way out of the language of a certain segment of contemporary speakers of Modern English. The slanted lines connecting the horizontal lines indicate the diachronic semasiological links between different meanings.

In the preceding sections, we have briefly mapped the various meanings of the word *culture* as well as the lexical relations that connect them diachronically and synchronically. This etymological study serves several purposes. First, it allows us to understand how the metacultural concepts developed from earlier non-metacultural uses of the term *culture* in the basic sense of ‘growing’ or ‘cultivating.’ Second, it also highlights the extent to which the lexicalization of metacultural concepts is a historical problem. That is, the emergence of specific forms of lexicalized metaculture can only be understood if we understand the historical context

³⁴² Only lines (III), (I.1.a) and (I.1.b) are in red.

³⁴³ The first and last attestations of (I.1.b) given by the *OED* are:

- (i) Which is diked bitwene the crofte called herbelot and the **culture** called the hamehore. (in A. Clark *Eng. Reg. Godstow Nunnery* (1906) ii. 592, **a1475**)
- (ii) Robert, son of Hubert, gave one flat or **culture** of land here in Wythage. (J. Ramsden *Hist. Acct. Kirkstall-Abbey* 17, **1773**)

³⁴⁴ The first and last attestations of (I.1.c) given by the *OED* are:

- (i) The erth ... by ... dylygent labor ... ys brought to marvelous **culture** & fortylite. (T. Starkey *Dial. Pole & Lupset* (1989) 9, **a1538**)
- (ii) The land along the road is in the very highest **culture**. A great deal of it was covered with yellow-blossomed crops of rape. (H. N. Moseley *Notes by Naturalist* xix. 485, **1879**)

³⁴⁵ The only attestation of (III), which is very rare, given by the *OED* is:

- (i) Whan they departe from the **culture** and honour of theyr god. (Caxton tr. J. de Voragine *Golden Legende* f. lxxxi/1, **1483**)

Culture in sense (III) can thus be said to be a separate word standing in a relation of homonymy (rather than polysemy) to *culture* in senses (I) and (II). Although both words derive from Latin, and may be lexically related in that language, they are not directly related in English. Since (III) is rare and long obsolete, we shall not discuss it further here. However, in order to fully understand the complexities of the lexical field of the form *culture*, it is still useful to include it in the mapping of *culture* in Figure 13.

in which it took place. Who felt the need to conveniently package a complex concept into a single lexical item? What were the historical factors that led these people to be interested in debating theories built on such metacultural concepts? Third, by illustrating the idiosyncratic and parochial nature of the various concepts of *culture* as highly language specific notions that are the products of a specific linguistic trajectory and particular intellectual traditions, this study highlights the dangers of assuming that Modern English concepts of *culture* are any more universally applicable than the pre-Qín metacultural concepts referred to by the term *wén*. Fourth, while far from exhaustive, this brief survey of the various uses of the word *culture* serves as a first step in our illustration of some of the problems involved in translating the pre-Qín term *wén* as ‘culture.’ Even beyond the question of whether such translations are appropriate, readers of recent translations of the *Lúnyǔ* are often left to determine for themselves which of the many meanings of *culture* is intended by the translator. Finally, the semantic analysis of *culture* outlined here illustrates the use of the term in the language in general. As such, it serves as a good point of departure for an analysis of the use of the term within the field of sinology or Chinese studies.

5.3 The term *culture* in Chinese studies: the lingering legacy of culturalism

The term *culture* plays a pivotal role in the theoretical framework referred to as ‘culturalism’ or the ‘culturalist paradigm’ in the fields of Chinese history and Chinese studies. Formulated by John K. Fairbank (1907-1991) and Joseph Levenson (1920-1969) in the 1940s and 1950s, this framework is based on the dual assumptions that “China” is predominantly a cultural entity rather than a political one, and that basic elements of “Chinese culture” as a monolithic whole remained stable over more than two millennia from antiquity to the fall of the Qing dynasty in

the early 20th century. As pointed out by numerous critics, these assumptions are highly problematic since they often lead to essentializing approaches to the study of identity.

However, although culturalism as a research paradigm in Chinese studies was thoroughly criticized in a number of influential works from the 1980s and 1990s³⁴⁶, lingering patterns of culturalist thinking and terminology can still be found in the use of the word *culture*, both in translations of pre-Qín texts and in the secondary literature on ‘cultural identity.’ In the early 1990s, Farquhar and Hevia criticized “mainstream historiography” for its lack of interest in specifying “the sources of culture’s foot-dragging power” and the general failure among Western historians of China “to see our own practice as analysts as cultural in any way.” (Farquhar and Hevia 1993:488) While their criticism was mainly directed at historians of modern China, it is still valid for many recent historical studies of ‘cultural identity’ in early China.

Like the word *culture*, *culturalism* also has a complex field of meanings that may be conveniently, although somewhat simplistically, grouped into two different main types, depending on the concept of ‘culture’ on which they are based: (i) a universal/imperial culturalism based on the Arnoldian notion of ‘culture’ (in the singular, as a mass noun) as the best or only true tradition of values of human civilization, and (ii) particular/national culturalism based on the anthropological concept of ‘culture’ (as a count noun) as the set of transmitted practices and values of a particular group at a particular time in history. Since particular/national culturalism is largely confined to discussions of uses of ‘culture’ for political purposes in modern nation states, it needs not occupy us further here.³⁴⁷ In contrast, various forms of

³⁴⁶ See Dirlik (1985), Dirlik (1987), Farquhar and Hevia (1993) and Zito (1997) among others.

³⁴⁷ Eriksen and Stjernfelt (2010) provide a definition of ‘culturalism’ that neatly captures the most common meaning of the term in current political theory:

Culturalism is the idea that individuals are determined by their culture, that these cultures form closed, organic wholes, and that the individual is unable to leave his or her own culture but rather can only realise him or herself within it. Culturalism also maintains that cultures have a claim to special rights and protections – even if at the same time they violate individual rights. (Eriksen and Stjernfelt 2010)

universal/imperial culturalism still influence the way pre-Qín cultural identity is studied. It is therefore important to be clear about the assumptions on which this type of culturalism is founded.

5.3.1 Fairbank (1942): culturism and the tribute system

Fairbank (1942) appears to have been the first to use the term *culturism* (=culturalism) to refer to an explanatory framework in Chinese history. According to the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2011), the word *culturism* in the sense of “belief in the relative superiority or inferiority of certain cultures; discrimination or prejudice based on assumptions about culture” is first attested in Fairbank’s 1942 article “Tributary Trade and China’s relations with the West.” Although coined through different paths of morphological derivation, the terms *culturism* and *culturalism* refer to the same concept. After a period of lexical competition, the term *culturalism* eventually won out, and *culturism* appears to have become almost obsolete (although the *OED* lists a few recent attestations). Fairbank (1942) outlined his theory of “Chinese” ‘culturism’ to explain the unpreparedness of Chinese diplomats when faced with the gunboats that eventually accompanied Western trade in China. The following passage from the introduction of Fairbank’s article contains what is perhaps one of the most explicit links between the ‘tribute system’ and ‘culturism/culturalism’ ever formulated:

Their analysis of the uses and abuses of culturalism both on both the right and left of the political spectrum also illustrates the way the term is used in political debates in popular media:

The controversy on multiculturalism has changed the political fronts. The Left defends respect for minority cultures while the Right stands guard over the national culture. But these two fronts merely constitute two variants of a culturalist ideology. The culturalism of today, in which culture becomes a political ideology, thrives on both the Left and the Right. Most well-known is leftwing multiculturalism, which has a radical, anti-democratic variant as well as one that suggests that it is possible to harmonize multiculturalism and (social-) liberal views. However, multiculturalism can also exist in forms that belong to the far Right, such as the French concepts of ethnopluralism, the idea that all cultures have the right to autonomy as long as each remains in its own territory. This approach results in political conclusions to the effect that immigrants must either allow themselves to be assimilated lock, stock and barrel, including everything from their religion down to their cuisine, or else return to their original native countries (assuming that such countries exist). (Eriksen and Stjernfelt 2010)

The tributary system was a natural expression of Chinese **cultural** ego-centricity. Ever since the bronze age, when the **civilization** of the Shang dynasty (c. 1500-1100 B.C.) had first appeared as a **culture-island** in the Yellow River basin, the inhabitants of the Chinese state had been surrounded by barbarian peoples of inferior **culture**. At no time were they in direct contact with an equal **civilization**, for all of Eastern Asia-Korea, Japan, Annam, Siam-became **culturally** affiliated to the Middle Kingdom, while India and the Near East remained cut off by the arid land mass of Central Asia. Separated from the West, the Chinese empire grew by the **acculturation** of its borders. Its expansion was the expansion of a way of life. Where the Chinese agrarian way of life could not be followed, as upon the arid pasture land of the Mongolian steppe, there the expansion of the empire usually stopped. [...]

From this age-long contact with the barbarians roundabout, including both the nomads of the northern steppe and the aborigines of the south, the Chinese [130] were impressed with one fact: that their superiority was not one of mere material power but of **culture**. Such things as the Chinese written language and the Confucian code of conduct were signs of this **culture** and so great was their virtue, so overwhelming the achievements of the Middle Kingdom in art and letters and the art of living, that no barbarian could long resist them. Gradually but invariably the barbarian in contact with China tended to become Chinese, by this most flattering act reinforcing the Chinese conviction of superiority. On their side the inhabitants of the Middle Kingdom, themselves largely descendants of barbarians, stood always ready to judge a man by **cultural** rather than by racial or national standards. After centuries of solitary grandeur as the center of Eastern Asia, the Chinese developed what may be called, by analogy to nationalism, a spirit of "**culturism**." Those who did not follow the Chinese way were ipso facto inferior, and dangerous when strong, and this view was supported by (or emanated from) an entire cosmology and a well-balanced system of ethics. Without venturing too far into earlier history we may try to note certain of the ideas which supported this "**culturism**." (Fairbank 1942:129-130, bold fonts added)

This brief outline of the culturalist perspective on Chinese history illustrates the tendency among some 20th century historians to use Western concepts such as 'culture'—which as discussed in section 5.2 are very much a parochial product of Western modernity and colonialism—as universally applicable analytical categories. In this short passage, Fairbank uses terms derived from the root *cultur*- no less than ten times. Furthermore, he uses the quasi-equivalent terms *civilization*, *way of life* and *system of ethics* an additional six times.³⁴⁸ In other words, 'culture' understood as 'civilization,' 'system of ethics' or 'way of life' is the central concept upon which

³⁴⁸ Farquhar and Hevia (1993:493) also observe that "terms like 'tradition,' 'civilization,' and 'culture' appear interchangeably in Fairbank."

Fairbank builds his explanation of the importance of the tribute system in Chinese diplomacy, as well as a number of other characteristics of Chinese imperial history.³⁴⁹

A number of the central assumptions of what later becomes known as the ‘culturalist paradigm’ are already present in Fairbank’s early formulation. First, the assumption of a clear-cut Sino-barbarian dichotomy between the ‘Chinese,’ who think of themselves as having a superior ‘culture,’ and the culturally inferior ‘barbarians’ is the foundation on which all the other features of the culturalist paradigm follow. Second, the notion of ‘culture’ invoked here is thus akin to the Arnoldian concept of ‘high culture’ as the only true civilization. Third, ‘culture’ is invoked as the ideological justification for empire-building. The fourth assumption can be called the sinicization thesis. That is, ‘barbarians’ who are culturally inferior can nevertheless become part of ‘Chinese’ civilization through ‘acculturation’ or ‘sinicization.’ Fifth, ‘identity’ is thus defined more in terms of ‘culture’ than race and ethnicity. Sixth, “China” is defined more as a ‘cultural’ than a political entity. Seventh, Chinese ‘culture’ is assumed to be timeless. Although Chinese ‘culture’ is assumed to originate in the Shang ‘culture-island’ of the Yellow River, it quickly (and magically) assumes an impervious shape and is assumed to persist over millennia. Eighth, since it is universally applicable, Chinese ‘culture’ can be exported to areas beyond ‘China proper’ such as Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Ninth, ‘Confucianism’ or the ‘Confucian code’ is taken to be the ideological core of the timeless Chinese ‘culture.’³⁵⁰

While Fairbank may be the first to label this Sino-centric worldview “culturism,” the roots of it can be traced back much earlier. Indeed much of traditional Chinese historiography

³⁴⁹ The problems related to Fairbank’s use of the term ‘tribute system’ have been pointed out by a number of scholars, see, for example, Zito (1997) among others.

³⁵⁰ See Reischauer and Fairbank (1960:290-4; 317-9) for later formulations of Fairbank’s theories of “Chinese ‘Culturalism’” and role of the “tribute system” in “Sino-foreign” trade and diplomatic relations. Langlois (1980) contains useful discussion of the role of culturalist patterns of thinking during the Yuan (1279-1368). Townsend (1992) also contains useful discussion Chinese culturalism.

has been influenced by similar ideas of a superior Chinese ‘civilization’ at the center of the realm known to man (*tiānxià*) and surrounded by concentric circles of increasingly uncivilized peoples.³⁵¹ Early generations of Western sinologists can thus be argued to have adopted this perspective from the sources they were studying, as well as from their Chinese colleagues and ‘tutors.’³⁵² What is new about 20th century Western Sinology is thus not so much the adoption of a Sino-centric perspective on Chinese history, but rather the increasingly important role of the Modern English concept of ‘culture’ as the central analytical category of historical studies in the ‘culturalist paradigm.’

All of the nine assumptions of Fairbank’s culturism listed above have been thoroughly criticized. One of the main points of criticism is that he uncritically adopts the Sino-centric perspective of traditional Chinese historiography. Later studies have revealed that far from there being a clear-cut dichotomy between the Zhōu and the ‘barbarians,’ notions of ‘identity’ were constructed categories that varied considerably depending on real-political concerns, philosophical persuasions of the composers/compiler of pre-Qín texts, as well as a number of other factors.³⁵³ Thus, neither “China,” “Chinese culture,” “elite culture,” “Confucianism,” the “tribute system,” etc. were fixed categories that remained stable throughout the imperial period.³⁵⁴ However, in spite of the fact that almost no one working in Chinese studies today would overtly endorse any of basic assumptions of the ‘culturalist paradigm,’ the legacy of these assumptions lingers on in the often uncritical use of the terms *culture* and *cultural identity* in studies of early Chinese history and thought.

³⁵¹ See Schaberg (2001a:125). See also the discussion in chapter 4 of the relationship between metacultural *wén* and the concepts of *tiānxià* as a ‘regime of value.’

³⁵² Legge himself discusses his working relationship with Chinese scholars in the preface to Legge (1861). For more detailed discussion of Legge’s reliance on Chinese scholars, see also Pfister (2004).

³⁵³ See Di Cosmo (2002), among others.

³⁵⁴ See Zito (1997).

5.3.2 Levenson (1953): the culturalism to nationalism thesis

Although Fairbank outlined the main tenets of culturalism in the early 1940s, Joseph R. Levenson's work from the 1950s and 1960s also played an important role in the popularization of the culturalist paradigm in Chinese studies. After gaining prominence in the humanities and social sciences in the 1960s and 1970s, culturalist theory has continued to play an important role in the context of Western sinology. Briefly stated, the central idea of Levenson (1953), is that Liang Qichao "fought his way from culturalism to nationalism" (Levenson 1953:95-108). That is, Levenson views pre-Modern China as a "culturally-defined community." In contrast, the modern nation-state is taken to be "politically-defined community."³⁵⁵ Levenson used the culturalist framework to formulate what has been referred to as his 'culturalism to nationalism thesis' to explain the identity crisis experienced in China during the transition from an imperial realm (*tiānxià* 天下 'lit. (all) under heaven') to a nation-state (*guójiā* 國家) in the 19th and 20th centuries.³⁵⁶ In Levenson's work, where culturalism and nationalism are viewed as mutually incompatible entities, one is forced to choose between a historicized past of traditional "Chinese" 'culture' and the modern nation-state based on whole-scale adoption of Western ideas.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ The terms 'culturally-defined' and 'politically-defined community' are from Townsend's (1992:100) summary of Levenson's culturalism.

³⁵⁶ See Levenson (1953:108-122). The phrase "culturalism to nationalism thesis" is from Townsend (1992:97).

The paradigm that governs this perspective is what I call the 'culturalism to nationalism thesis.' It is a loose paradigm at best and has no single source or definitive formulation, but its underlying assumptions pervade the academic literature on modern China. The core proposition is that a set of ideas labelled 'culturalism' dominated traditional China, was incompatible with modern nationalism and yielded only under the assault of imperialism and Western ideas to a new nationalist way of thinking. The history of modern China, then, is one in which nationalism replaces culturalism as the dominant Chinese view of their identity and place in the world. Because this was a transformation of collective cultural and political identity, it was a long and traumatic process that left its mark, and continues to do so, on all periods and divisions within the modern era. (Townsend (1992:97))

³⁵⁷ Levenson's assumed clash between culturalism and nationalism has been criticized by later works that have demonstrated that culturalist thinking, of the nationalist/particular kind, often go hand-in-hand with young nations searching for national identity.

Levenson's 'culturalism to nationalism thesis' has been criticized on a number of fronts. First, as observed by Ojha (1969:x-xi, 26-50) and Townsend (1990:106), the idea of 'culturalism as identity' is not necessarily incompatible with nationalism. That is, China's search for a new national identity after the decay of the imperial order during the first decades of the 20th century can in many ways be viewed as the construction of a new national 'cultural identity.' Thus Ojha and Townsend note "how easily culturalism supported or merged with a 'cultural nationalism' that vigorously defended Chinese culture against foreign competitors" (Townsend 1992:106). In other words, rather than a transition from 'culturalism to nationalism,' Chinese history in the 20th can be described as a transition from a universal/imperial culturalism to a national/particular culturalism.³⁵⁸

The second, and in this context more important, criticism of Levensonian culturalism is that the level of abstraction and separation of 'culture' and history on which it is based easily leads to essentialism. Dirlik (1987) aptly describes Levenson's culturalism—which incorporates most, if not all, of the assumptions of Fairbankian culturism listed above—as an abstract hegemonic ideology:

A hegemonic culturalism abstracts **culture** from its social and political context in order to present it as an autochthonous attribute of entire groups and peoples that is exterior to, and independent of, social relationships. **Culture**, thus abstracted, is alienated from the social present, and is made into a timeless attribute of peoples that determines the character of the relationships into which they enter with others. It serves as a principle for organizing time and space, with the **culture** of the self at the center of space and the apogee of time. Abstraction is the epistemological starting point of culturalism as hegemonic ideology. (Dirlik 1987:43)³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ See the definitions of universal/imperial culturalism and national/particular culturalism in section 5.3 above.

³⁵⁹ Dirlik first uses the term "hegemonic culturalism" in reference to Levenson's work in Dirlik (1985).

By assuming ‘Chinese culture’ to exist beyond time and space, culturalism effectively places ‘culture’ outside history.³⁶⁰ It thus becomes the defining characteristic of an essentialized ‘Chinese identity’ that is assumed to have remained stable throughout more than two millennia.

The passage from Dirlik (1987) also illustrates the double-use of the term *culturalism*. As observed by Townsend (1992:106), two different uses of the term should be kept apart to avoid confusion. First, it is used to describe the ethno-centric ideology of imperial China as a superior civilization. In this meaning, Western scholars (Fairbank, Levenson, and their followers, e.g., Stover (1974), etc.) use the term to describe and explain Chinese history. In the second meaning, illustrated by the Dirlik passage, Western theorists (e.g., Dirlik) use the term to describe the research paradigms of other Western scholars (e.g., Faribank, Levenson, etc.).

5.3.3 Parsons (1966): China as symbolic-ritualistic social order

Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) was also influential in propagating the culturalist paradigm in Chinese history. In his 1966 book *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives*, he classified “China” as a “symbolic-ritualistic” “cultural system” based on observance of ‘rites’ or ‘moral decorum’ (*lǐ* 禮) in contrast to the “rationalistic” principles of the Western tradition inherited from ancient Greece (Parsons 1966:71-74). In Parsons’s culturalist approach to Chinese history, society and culture are two sides of the same coin. Thus in China, “[t]he social structure [...] interpenetrated with the primary cultural system in a particularly intimate way. The culturally qualified group took over control of society [...] by virtue of embodiment of the ideal cultural patterns” (Parsons 1966:74). The “culturally qualified group” here refers to the social

³⁶⁰ See also Farquhar and Hevia (Farquhar and Hevia 1993).

elites educated in the traditional “Confucian” curriculum, who are assumed to “embody” the ideal ethical values of the “Confucian” tradition based on the teachings of the ancient sage-kings.

In Parsons’s culturalist framework, it is the symbolic-ritualistic nature of Chinese society, with its emphasis on ritual observation and filial duties, which created a “socio-political structure which was without peer in scale, stability, and durability until the truly modern era.” However, on a more negative note, it was also responsible for the failure to produce the same level of “rationalization of law and legal procedure” and differentiation of “economic structures” that characterized the Western traditions inherited from ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. (Parsons 1966:77)³⁶¹

Farquhar and Hevia (1993) summarize the influence of Parsons’s culturalist approach to Chinese history as follows:

Invariably, **culture** was the most convenient factor to explain willful backwardness and irrationality in the face of rapid global modernization. Timeless **Culture** opposed the tides of History and functioned to maintain institutions in specific regressive forms (Parsons 1966:29). While we are fully aware that there was substantial debate over the specificities of Parsons’s approach, the content of his categories, and the nomenclature he deployed (which today would no doubt be termed “jargon”), we would argue that he and other social scientists at Harvard provided what John Fairbank (Fairbank 1982:326-327) has termed an “analytic framework” for organizing empirical data on various social formations in a comparativist framework. Of particular significance in this regard is that while some Parsonian nomenclature may have been abandoned, the idea that **culture** legitimizes power (be it political or economic) in “pre-modern” societies continues to be a dominant idea within the China field. (Farquhar and Hevia 1993:492)

In the ‘China field,’ culturalism as defined in this passage tended to be “taken as a given with respect to Chinese Civilization” (Langlois 1980:356) until the early 1980s.³⁶² Over the course of the 1980s and until the present day, work done within this culturalist paradigm has been heavily criticized on a number of fronts. First, most scholars have now moved away from the idea of a

³⁶¹ For a similar critical summary of Parsons (1966), see Farquhar and Hevia (1993:488).

³⁶² For assessments of culturalism in Chinese studies, see also Marks (1985), Cohen (1985) and Cohen (1993).

monolithic “Chinese culture” passed down without major changes from the Han (206 BCE - 220 CE) down to the end of the Qíng (1644-1911). Rather than being fixed once and for all in antiquity, “Chinese culture” has never stopped incorporating ‘foreign’ elements (e.g., Buddhism) and adapting to new circumstances. Second, the assumption that the ‘foreign’ rulers of the Yuan and the Qíng were heavily ‘sinicized’ has been criticized by recent research.³⁶³ Nevertheless, in spite of being (almost) unanimously disavowed, a legacy of culturalist ways of thinking about identity and ‘culture’ in pre-modern China still has the potential to linger on in the pervasive and often uncritical use of the word *culture*.³⁶⁴

5.3.4 Uses of the term *culture* in recent studies of the pre-Qín period

The monolithic “Chinese culture” assumed by culturalist historians such as Fairbank and Levenson to have existed largely unchanged for two millennia is generally taken to have its roots in pre-Qín works such as the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Mèngzǐ*, the *Xúnzǐ* and the *Zuǒzhàn* which are traditionally lumped together as “Confucian.”³⁶⁵ Thus, while the culturalist ‘paradigm’ was developed mainly as an explanatory framework for late-imperial and modern Chinese history, it still has obvious implications for the study of early China. First, while most agree that the Qín unification in 221 BCE and the subsequent consolidation of imperial government institutions and ideology during the Han dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE) constitute an important stage in the

³⁶³ See Birge (2002), Crossley (1999), Elliott (2001), among others.

³⁶⁴ Thus a number of recent studies of identity in early China, make liberal use of expressions such as ‘cultural identity’ without providing an explicit definition of what is meant by the term *cultural*. In other words, the inseparable unity of ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ seems to have achieved the status of a generally accepted axiom (which is, incidentally, exactly how culturalism construes the relationship between ‘culture’ and ‘identity’). In that sense, by being so ingrained in the way we have become accustomed to think and talk about identity, remnants of an insidious form of culturalism still survives in the terminology ‘culture’ used to study identity.

³⁶⁵ I am using quotation marks around the expression “Confucian” to indicate that I do not share the traditional assumption that “Confucianism” or a unified “Confucian” school of thought existed in the pre-Qín period. For a useful discussion of the problems related to the use of the terms “Confucianism” and “Confucian” in studies of pre-Qín though, see Goldin (2011).

crystallization of “Chinese culture,” the (somewhat futile and heavily politicized) question of determining exactly when “Chinese culture” first came into existence is one that has preoccupied a large number of scholars in China, as well as some non-Chinese scholars.³⁶⁶ Second, since *culture* is a key term in culturalist theory, anyone now using the term in studies of pre-Qín concepts of identity must explicitly state in what sense it is being used. Unspecified use of the word *culture*, both when translating Old Chinese terms (such as *wén*) and when using it as an analytical category, may potentially lead readers to assume (either correctly or incorrectly, as it may be) that the author shares the basic assumptions of the culturalist paradigm.

For many contemporary Chinese historians and archaeologists, the question of dating the earliest origins of “Chinese culture” (*wén huà* 文化) or “civilization” (*wén míng* 文明) is heavily politicized. As witnessed by the recent Three Dynasties Project commissioned by the Chinese government, which aimed to provide a definitive chronology of approximately five thousand years of “Chinese” history and civilization, scholars face tremendous political pressure to produce research results that accord with the political agenda of the Communist Party. Since it adds to China’s international prestige to have an ancient civilization that can be compared in age to other ancient civilizations such as those of Mesopotamia and Egypt, many archaeologists and historians in China have set out to project the origins of “Chinese culture” further and further back in time.³⁶⁷ Furthermore, since most Chinese scholars are trained in historiographic traditions based on traditional chronologies of the three dynasties (the Xià, the Shāng and the Zhōu) which have been the backbone of Chinese history writing throughout imperial China,

³⁶⁶ Harrison (1969) suggests that “Chinese culture” emerged “[f]ollowing the Qin-Han imperial unification in 221 BC.” Parsons (1966) ventures that around 200 BC was when the “cultural system” became “*fully* institutionalized in a *unified* large-scale society.”

³⁶⁷ See Falkenhausen (1993), Li Xuéqín 李學勤 (2003), etc.

many of them may sincerely believe that the Xià dynasty existed (although we have no written records from the period) and that it was a “Chinese” dynasty.

While most Western (as well as some Chinese) scholars remain highly skeptical of attempts to project the origins of “Chinese culture” back into pre-history, Allan (2007) proposes tracing the formation of “Chinese civilization” to the Erlitou culture in the early second millennium BCE. Central to Allan’s explanatory framework is the concept of ‘cultural hegemony.’

[A]n elite **culture** first crystallized in the early second millennium BCE at Yanshi Erlitou in Henan Province in which bronze was associated with a set of religious practices centered on ancestral offerings. It established a **cultural** hegemony over the Chinese continental region by the middle of the millennium (early Shang Dynasty). Archaeologically, its primary markers are bronze vessels with a common set of motifs and ritual forms. Although **cultural** diversity and local political authority remained, it was unlike the previous Neolithic **cultures** because it had no challenger in range or influence. Moreover, it anticipated the later common elite **culture**, which in Confucius’s time was defined in terms of shared rites. Thus, we may legitimately call it an early stage of “Chinese **civilization**.” (Allan 2007:461)

At first glance, the parallels between this summary of Allan (2007) and the formulation of *culturism* in Fairbank (1942) appear to be numerous. First, both Allan’s use of the terms ‘civilization’ and ‘elite culture’ and Fairbank’s concept of ‘culture’ contain an implication of cultural superiority.³⁶⁸ Second, Allan’s description of Erlitou culture as finding “no challenger in range or influence” echoes Fairbank’s description of the Chinese as viewing other peoples as ‘culturally inferior.’ Third, just as Fairbank characterized the Shang as a “culture-island,” so does

³⁶⁸ Towards the end of her article Allan explains her use of the term *civilization* and its implications of superiority in more detail: “The level of social and political complexity implicit in state formation is frequently associated with ‘civilization,’ even by scholars who reject evolutionary schemes (Yoffee (2005:15-19); see also Trigger (2003:40-52)). Civilization is a slippery term. Because it often denotes a sense of cultural superiority and because of its particular associations with European imperialism, many scholars prefer not to use it at all. However, the idea that the conventional patterns of behavior in one’s own culture are uniquely human, superior, or more “civilized” than those of other peoples is not especially European. Indeed, it is probably universal. Moreover, in complex societies, there are conventional patterns of behavior associated with elite groups that are thought to reflect social superiority.” (Allan 2007:489)

Allan assume that the “cultural hegemony” of “Chinese civilization” became established in the early Shāng period. Fourth, both Allan’s and Fairbank’s notion of “elite culture” is reminiscent of the system of “shared rites,” or “symbolic-ritualistic” system in Parsons’s terminology. Elsewhere Allan explicitly states that she is “concerned with cultural influence rather than political authority.” (Allan 2007:465) This, in turn, is similar to Levenson’s distinction between culturally-defined and politically-defined societies.

While Allan (2007) may display a number of apparent affinities with Fairbank’s and Levenson’s culturalism, her article contains no explicit references to these earlier culturalist paradigms. Given the fact that she is interested in a period that usually falls outside the temporal scope of ‘culturalist’ explanations, such references would indeed seem misplaced. Nevertheless, it may difficult for the reader not to let his or her view of Allan’s analysis be affected by the culturalist-sounding jargon in which it is formulated. Without passing judgment on the validity of her analysis, this example highlights the problems related to the use of English metacultural terms such as *culture* and *civilization* in the analysis of metacultural consciousness in ancient civilizations. Using parochial metacultural English terms of Western modernity inevitably carries with it a host of unwanted theoretical baggage that risks clouding the analysis.

The following passage from Schaberg’s (2001a) analysis of the concept of ‘culture’ and ‘cultural otherness’ in early Chinese historiography provides another example of the problems generated by the use of ‘culture’ as an analytical category.

In the perspective of the *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu*, the known world is a space cleared in the wilderness by **culture**. **Culture**, which is both a system of prescriptions and the legitimizing account of their origins, establishes the distinctions that define the human world. [...] The **cultural** principles by which the human world is to be organized and understood assume a perfect clarity about place and time: these are the central states under Zhōu rule. But this clarity is established in opposition to the surrounding uncertainties of **cultural** otherness and historical change. The principles advanced in speeches prescribe **cultural** practices of religion, politics, and

morality in the central realm and also begin to describe events beyond its edges. What unites the many specific principles of human relations is a flexible and encompassing concept of ritual propriety (*li*). In the hands of the historiographers, this concept was the key to interpretation of the world and narration of its history. (Schaberg 2001a:125)

As with the passage from Allan (2007) discussed above, this passage from Schaberg (2001a) also at first appears to be written in the terminology reminiscent of that of the culturalist paradigm. For example, the distinction between the Zhōu and their “others” is articulated in terms of ‘culture.’ Situated at the center of the known realm, the Zhōu culture emanates outwards towards the ‘wildernesses’ at the edges of the world. Based on ritual propriety (*lǐ* 禮), Zhōu ‘culture’ is defined in a way that immediately brings to mind the ‘symbolic-ritualistic’ order of Parsonian culturalism. However, placed in the context of his book-length analysis of early Chinese historiography, it is clear that Schaberg (2001a) by no means considers his work to be within the culturalist paradigm. But, as with Allan (2007), the use of the term *culture* to analyze pre-Qín thought and society is still problematic.

These examples from Allan (2007) and Schaberg (2001a) illustrate the problems facing anyone interested in describing and analyzing ‘cultural phenomena’ in early China, i.e., the problems of how to refer to them without having recourse to culturalist-sounding terminology. As was argued in greater detail in chapters 1-4, a possible solution may be to reconstruct the metacultural terminology of the pre-Qín texts themselves. In other words, lexical semantic studies of the lexicalization of metacultural concepts may enable us to avoid, or at least mitigate, the ethno-centric biases (as well as the essentializing tendencies) which are part of the legacy of the ‘culturalist paradigm’ of Fairbank, Levenson and Parsons. Needless to say, studying cultural consciousness through lexical change requires the existence of written records. However, studies such as Allan (2007) of ‘cultural identity’ in periods for which we have no (or insufficient) written material are more exposed to the dangers of universalizing modern Western analytical

categories of ‘culture.’ However, even here, a heightened awareness of the parochial nature of the meanings and uses of the term *culture* obtained through a study of the lexicalization of metacultural concepts in Modern English (see section 5.2) may help us avoid the pitfalls of imposing our own conceptions of ‘culture’ onto ancient civilizations.

Note that I do not imply that anyone who uses the term *culture* or phrases such as *cultural identity* and *cultural otherness*, etc., necessarily endorses all the assumptions of culturalist paradigm of Fairbank, Levenson and Parsons (e.g., the timeless monolithic nature of pre-modern Chinese culture, etc.). But I do argue that we must be more careful in avoiding unqualified, abstract uses of the term *culture* in discussions of identity. What we refer to when saying that Americans and Russians have different ‘cultures’ is, in very important ways, quite different from what is referred to by stating that the Zhōu elite and the (non-Zhōu) Róng 戎 had different ‘cultures.’ As pointed out by Dirlik, “abstraction is the epistemological starting point of culturalism.” We should therefore be careful to avoid abstract references to ‘culture’ and ‘cultures’ that are not grounded in careful studies of the concrete differences due to specific socio-historical contexts. Indeed, given the extremely abstract nature of the term *culture* itself, casually employing it puts one at risk of falling unconsciously into culturalist ways of thinking about identity in essentialist terms. Since diachronic lexical semantics is, by definition, a historical endeavor, the framework of lexicalized metaculture proposed gives us a way to leave the ethereal realm of Culture, and (re-)situate the study of metacultural consciousness in History, along the lines proposed by Farquhar and Hevia (1993).

5.4 Lexicalized metaculture in translation: a diachronic study of translations of the *Lúnyǔ*

After providing a semasiological mapping of the diachronic semantic processes which led to the current polysemy of the term *culture* in sections 5.2 and 5.3, we are now in a position to address the questions asked at the beginning of the chapter: How do we account for the increasing use of the word *culture* to render the Old Chinese word *wén* in translations of the *Lúnyǔ*? Can the growing popularity of *culture* as a translation of *wén* be linked to the lexical semantic changes of the English word *culture* and to trends in the humanities and social sciences, such as the ‘culturalist paradigm’ in Chinese studies? Do these trends have an impact on the frequency of the term *culture* in translations of the *Lúnyǔ*?

Unsurprisingly, the two dozen translations of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1691 to 2007 consulted here tend to be products of their time following the general popularity of the word *culture* both in colloquial usage and as a theoretical term. In other words, the specific English translations of Old Chinese metacultural terminology is clearly related to the supply of lexicalized metacultural terms in the English language at the time of translation. Rather than critically evaluating the linguistic soundness of the many different translations of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ*, my goal is to illustrate the growing importance of the concept of ‘culture’ in the western sinological tradition and the complexities involved in the translation of lexicalized metaculture. Since the use of the word *culture* in translations of *wén* in Old Chinese texts is subject to linguistic developments in the English language in general, as well as to the development of specific anthropological theories, using it as a universally applicable analytical category is clearly highly problematic.

Following the different stages in the development of the concept of ‘culture’ in colloquial usage and academic theories, the translations of the *Lúnyǔ* studied here can be divided into six periods: (i) 1691-1800, (ii) 1800-1850s, (iii) 1860s-1890s, (iv) 1900-1930, (v) 1930s-1990, and

(vi) 1990s-2011. The first stage—from the publication of the first English translation of the *Lúnyǔ* in 1691 to 1800—represents the “prenatal stirrings” of the concept of ‘culture.’³⁶⁹ According to the *OED* the word *culture* is sporadically attested as meaning ‘high culture’ or ‘refinement of mind, taste, and manners, or artistic and intellectual development’ in this period.³⁷⁰ Although pre-1800 uses of the word *culture* to refer to the result of a ‘cultivation process’ are attested, Intorcetta (1691)—which is the only English translation of the *Lúnyǔ* from this period—does not translate *wén* as *culture*, or even contain a single occurrence of the word *culture*.

The exact reasons why early translators of the *Lúnyǔ* did not employ the word *culture* (in spite of the fact that the word was already beginning to be used in English in meanings that could potentially be perceived as overlapping with those of the Chinese word *wén*) may forever elude us. However, a few general observations may be relevant. First, the English word *culture* was still used primarily to refer to the ‘growing and nurturing of plants and animals’ or to the process of ‘nurturing of the mind’ through reading and study. It was not yet frequently used to refer to the more abstract metacultural meanings of *culture* as ‘refined tradition.’ Second, it should be noted that pre-1800 English translations of early Chinese works tend to be translations from earlier translations in Latin (or other European languages) rather than direct translations from Old Chinese. The English version of Intorcetta (1691) is a rendering based on the (1688) French

³⁶⁹ According to Masuzawa (1998:70), the concept of ‘culture’ had its “prenatal stirrings” in the 18th century, before taking firmer shape during the 19th century.

³⁷⁰ See example (II.5.i) in section 5.2.1 as well as the following examples from the 2003 3rd edition online version of the *OED*:

- (i) Men of any tolerable **Culture** and Civility must abhor the entering into any such Compact [L. *unde & abhorret à consuetudine hominum cultiorum tale pactum inire*]. (tr. S. von Pufendorf *Law of Nature & Nations* ii. ii. 91/1; **1703**)
- (ii) As no images can with propriety be taken from **culture** or civil society in the dialogues, I am under the necessity of frequently repeating the most striking objects of nature. (S. W. Morton *Ouâbi* iv. 42; **1790**)

version and the original (1667) Latin translation.³⁷¹ The absence of the word *culture* in the English version may thus simply be due to the fact that the French and Latin versions also do not contain the words *culture* and *cultura*, respectively.

The beginning of the second period (1800-1850s) is marked by the translation of Herder's work into English from 1800, and by Marshman's partial translation of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1809, which is the first direct translation from Chinese into English.³⁷² After the translation of Herder's use of the German word *Kultur* into English *culture*, the word slowly began to be used in the sense of 'a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group' (Young 1995:42). However, this use of the word did not become part of the vocabulary of the average educated Englishman until almost a century later.³⁷³ Even the use of *culture* to refer to the concept of 'high culture' based on a 'refined tradition' of learning and values was not frequent, and does not appear to have been used in the common language before Arnold's popularization of the term in the 1860s and 1870s. Nevertheless, from 1800 onwards, both meanings of *culture* are beginning to be attested and, hence, could in principle have been used to translate Chinese *wén*. In spite of this, the word *culture* does not occur in the three translations from the first half of the century, i.e., Marshman (1809), Collie (1828) and Barnard (1855).

³⁷¹ As observed by Jenkinson (2006), the first English translation of a "Confucian" work is not, as usually assumed, Intorcetta (1691) but rather Nathanael Vincent's translation of the *Great Learning* from 1685. But as with other pre-1800 translations, this work is a translation of an earlier Jesuit Latin translation. "The origins of the Confucian texts to which he gained access help to explain how Vincent, who was presumably not one of the few men in seventeenth-century England who could understand Chinese, was able to translate from it. Although he does not specify exactly which publication this was, it seems to have been the *Sapientia Sinica* (1662). This was a Latin translation of Confucius's *Ta Hsiieh* and *Lun Yü*, published in Jianchang (a prefecture around Nanchang in Jianxi province) by the Jesuits Ignacio da Costa and Prospero Intorcetta." (Jenkinson 2006:39)

³⁷² See (Taam 1953:149): "The early part of the nineteenth century started with a few translations of Confucius by Protestant missionaries. Joshua Marshman, a member of the British Baptist Mission, published in 1809 his partial English translation of *The Analects*. [fn. 12] Three years later *The Great Learning* [fn. 13] was translated into English by Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary in China. These two works represent the earliest attempts to translate the Confucian classics into English directly from the Chinese text."

³⁷³ See Masuzawa (1998) and Williams (1983).

Instead of using the word *culture*, Marshman and Collie translate *wén* as ‘learning’ (M1.6, M6.27, MC7.32, C9.11, C12.24, C16.1), ‘learned/accomplished’ (MC5.15a, MC5.15b, C14.18), ‘study’ (C1.6), ‘literature’ (C, 6.27, MC7.24, C11.3), ‘excellent conduct/elegant manners’ (MC5.13), ‘beauty of virtue’ (M9.11), ‘appearance/(ornamental) accomplishments’ (MC6.18a, MC6.18b, MC6.18c, C12.8a, C12.8b, C12.8c), ‘mode of government’ (M8.18), ‘laws and rites’ (C.8.18), ‘polish (accomplishments)’ (C14.12), ‘adorn’ (C3.14), ‘register-books/records’ (MC3.9), ‘regulations’ (M3.14), ‘(left a blank in) the record’ (C15.26), and ‘put a false gloss upon’ (C19.8).³⁷⁴ Of special interest is the fact that the most prototypical use of metacultural *wén* in *LY* 9.5, which is translated as *culture* in almost all translations from the 20th century, is rendered by Marshman as ‘regulation of men and manners’ (M9.5a) and ‘(beautiful) order (of things)’ (M9.5b,c,d) and by Collie as ‘regulation (of laws and ceremonies/laws)’ (C9.5a,c,d) and ‘order of things’ (C9.5b). As the analysis of the term *wén* in chapters 2 and 3 illustrated, most of these translations are just as philologically sound, if not sounder, as later translations of *wén* as *culture*.

Why did the translators of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1800 to the 1850s choose not to translate any of the occurrences of *wén* as *culture*? Since the English word *culture* had already assumed the meaning of ‘high culture,’ as discussed in section 5.2.1 above, such a translation should, at least in theory, have been possible. However, the relatively new uses of the term *culture* to refer to metacultural concepts such as ‘high culture’ and ‘way of life’ were still confined to a small circle of scholars. Translating *wén* as *culture* would thus yield a translation that was inaccessible to a greater audience, and probably even to the translators themselves.

³⁷⁴ “M” and “C” are abbreviations for Harshman and Collie respectively. The expression “MC7.32” refers to the translation of *LY* 7.32 in Marshman (1809) and Collie (1828), etc.

The first renderings of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* as *culture* appear in translations from the third period from the 1860s to the end of the 19th century. At this time, the Arnoldian concept of ‘perfected, high culture’ had become part of the common vocabulary of educated readers, thereby making it possible for translators of early Chinese text to ‘discover’ the semantic overlap between metacultural *wén* and the English word *culture*. Of the three translations of the *Lúnyǔ* from this period, Jennings (1895)³⁷⁵ does not use the word *culture* at all, but it occurs twice in Legge (1861) and once in Gu (1898).

James Legge (1814-1897) started learning Chinese at University College in London. In 1839, at the age of 25, he began his overseas missionary work as a teacher at the Anglo-Chinese school Malacca, Malaysia. His work translating the Chinese classics began in 1841 and continued after he was transferred to Hong Kong in 1843.³⁷⁶ In 1861, when his translations of the *Lúnyǔ*, the *Dàxué* and the *Zhōngyōng* were published, he had already been engaged in the study of the Chinese classics for two decades.³⁷⁷

Legge (1861) is the first English translation of an early Chinese text to render *wén* as *culture*. In his translation of *LY* 12.24, he uses the term *culture* in the most common sense at the time, i.e., the Arnoldian concepts of ‘culture’ as the ‘refined state of manners and knowledge brought about by study of the best artistic products known to man.’

曾子曰：「君子以文會友，以友輔仁。」

The philosopher Tsāng said, ‘The superior man on grounds of **culture** meets with his friends, and by their friendship helps his virtue.’ (*LY* 12.24, tr. Legge (1861:262))

³⁷⁵ Jennings (1895) was printed again in Wilson (Wilson 1900).

³⁷⁶ In his list of works consulted, Legge (1861:135) lists Intorcetta (1687), Marshman (1809) and Collie (1828). Legge follows Marshman (1809) in translating *wén* as ‘regulations’ in *LY* 3.14 and as ‘learning’ in *LY* 6.27, and he follows Collie (1828) in translating *wén* as ‘learning’ in *LY* 9.11, as ‘ornamental accomplishments’ in *LY* 12.8, and as ‘accomplished’ in *LY* 14.18.

³⁷⁷ This brief biographical sketch is based on the prefaces in Legge (1861) and Taam (1953:149-150). For a longer treatment of Legge’s contribution to the development of the study of Chinese philosophy and religion, see Pfister (2004).

In an explanatory note, Legge (1861:262) further explains the phrase *yǐ wén* 以文 as “‘by means of letters,’ i.e., common literary studies and pursuits.” Legge’s use of the word *culture* in the *Lúnyǔ* thus refers to self-improvement through the edifying pursuit of literary studies, or polite studies.

Legge’s second use of *culture* to translate *wén* is in *LY* 16.1.

故遠人不服，則修文德以來之。

Therefore, if the remoter people are not submissive, all the influences of **civil culture** and virtue are to be cultivated to attract them to be so. (*LY* 16.1, Legge, tr. (1861:308-309))

In this passage the ‘civil culture’ that must be cultivated to attract non-submissive peoples can be interpreted either as (i) the ‘civil culture’ of the ruler, or as (ii) the general level of ‘civil culture’ of the ruled realm. In either case, the concept of ‘culture’ intended is still the Arnoldian notion of ‘refined high culture.’³⁷⁸

In addition to the use of *culture* in his translation of the *Lúnyǔ*, Legge (1861) also uses the term once in his translation of the *Great Learning*, albeit not as a translation of *wén* but of the phrase 自修 *zixiu* ‘self-edify’ (lit. ‘self-embellish’):

“如切如磋”者，道學也；“如琢如磨”者，自修也；

That expression—“As we cut and then file,” the work of learning. “As we chisel and then grind,” indicates that of **self-culture**. (*Daxue*, tr. Legge (1861:363))

Here Legge’s use of *culture* refers to the cultivation of one’s manners and mental dispositions through the slow and arduous process of study and self-discipline. As noted in section 5.2 the

³⁷⁸ See also the discussion of the expression *civil culture* in (II.5.i) in section 5.2.1 above.

19th century phrase *self-culture* has now become replaced by *self-cultivation*, see the discussion of examples (II4a.i-ii) in section 5.2.

Interestingly, Legge does not list ‘culture’ as one of the meanings of the word *wén* in his index of Chinese characters and phrases. Instead he lists the following meanings of the word: “(1) The characters of the language. [...] (2) Records, literary monuments. [...] (3) Literature, polite studies [...]”³⁷⁹ (4) Accomplished, accomplishments, elegance. [...] (5) The cause of truth. [...] (6) 文章 elegant manners and discourses; elegant institutions. [...] (7) Used as the honorary epithet, becoming in effect the name” (Legge 1861:340). He also does not list ‘culture’ in his subject index for the *Lúnyǔ*. All this indicates that, for Legge, *wén* had not yet been equated with his notion of ‘culture.’

Gū Hóngmíng 辜鴻銘 was the second translator to render *wén* as *culture*. Having an M.A. degree from the University of Edinburgh, Gū Hóngmíng was the first Chinese scholar to produce an English translation of the *Lúnyǔ*. He was rather critical of Legge, whom he described as “a pundit with a very learned but dead knowledge of Chinese books” and as someone with an “utter want of critical insight and literary perception.” (Gū Hóngmíng 辜鴻銘 1898:vii) In his translation of the *Lúnyǔ*, Gū Hóngmíng aimed to improve on earlier translations by making “Confucius and his disciples speak in the same way as an educated Englishman would speak had

³⁷⁹ As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the exact translation of the phrase *wénxué* 文學 is highly controversial. The exact parse of the phrase *wénxué* is still not clear. The two parses have been suggested: (i) ‘the study of *wén*’ where *wén* functions as the object of the deverbal noun *xué* ‘study,’ and (ii) ‘refined/polite/patterned (*wén*) studies’ where *wén* is the modifier of *xué* ‘study.’ Of these two parses, (i) is the least probable. I have yet to find any parallel construction in which nominalized transitive verbs are preceded by an indirect object. This leaves us with (ii) as the best shot.

The frequently encountered translation of *wénxué* as ‘literature’ or ‘literary studies’ is clearly an anachronistic imposition from modern Chinese. A better translation would be ‘polite studies’ in the 18th century sense of the word referring to the study of the ‘polite arts’, i.e. poetry, music, eloquence, etc. This translation fits with the second of the syntactic parses discussed above. Furthermore, the word ‘polite’ in the expression ‘polite studies’ derives historically from the word ‘polished’ through metaphorical extension. ‘Polite’ and *wén* thus share the same connotations of being ‘externally applied’ to human behavior through education in the same way that a decorative pattern is applied to the surface of a physical object.

he to express the same thoughts which the Chinese worthies had to express.” (Gū Hóngmíng 辜鴻銘 1898:viii)³⁸⁰

Gū Hóngmíng’s translation of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1898 only renders *wén* as *culture* once, i.e., in *LY* 14.11 where *culture* functions as a verb meaning to ‘improve’ or ‘edify.’

[...] 文之以禮樂，亦可以為成人矣。』

[...] if he would **culture** himself by the study of the arts and institutions of the civilised world, he would then be considered a perfect character. (*LY* 14.12, tr. Gū Hóngmíng (1898:121))

As Legge before him, Gū Hóngmíng’s use of the term *culture* also refers to the Arnoldian concept of ‘refined high culture’ or, in its verbal variant, ‘cultivating and refining through learning and discipline.’³⁸¹

Since Gū Hóngmíng is writing three decades after the appearance of Matthew Arnold’s influential work *Culture and Anarchy*, one would expect him to employ the word *culture* more frequently than Legge. And indeed, in addition to the single translation of *wén* as *culture* in *LY* 14.11, Gū Hóngmíng also uses the word *culture* half-a-dozen times in various translations of the phrase *hào xué* 好學 ‘lit. fond of learning.’³⁸² Thus, Gū Hóngmíng (1998) translates *hào xué* as “real man of culture” in *LY* 11.7 (Gū Hóngmíng 1898:85) and as “man of culture” in *LY* 19.5 (Gū Hóngmíng 1898:170). In other passages *hào xué* is translated as “a man of real culture,” e.g., *LY* 1.14 (Gū Hóngmíng 1898:6) and *LY* 6.3 (Gū Hóngmíng 1898:38-39). In *LY* 5.15, Gū Hóngmíng translates *hào xué* as “self-culture.” (Gū Hóngmíng 1898:32) Finally, in *LY* 17.8 (Gū Hóngmíng

³⁸⁰ For a short biographical sketch of Gū Hóngmíng, see (Taam 1953:150-151).

³⁸¹ As discussed in section 5.2, this verbal use of *culture* has now become obsolete and has largely been replaced by the verb *cultivate*.

³⁸² Note that the counts of token occurrences of the word *culture* in table 1 in section 5.1 above only include cases where *culture* is used to translate the word *wén*. Thus the total count for Gū Hóngmíng 辜鴻銘 (1898) is 1, rather 7 (which is the number of times *culture* occurs in the text (once to translate *wén* and six times in translations of *hào xué*).

1898:155-6) *hào xué* is simply translated as “culture.” Thus, although Gū Hóngmíng (1898) only translates *wén* as *culture* once, the word *culture* still figures prominently in his translation of the *Lúnyǔ*. In that respect, Gū Hóngmíng’s translation indicates that the concept of ‘culture’ played a more important role at the turn of the century than when Legge produced his translation almost 4 decades earlier.³⁸³

Of special interest is also the fact that Gū Hóngmíng (1898) is the first translation of the *Lúnyǔ* to render *wén* as *civilisation*. This also matches his translation of *lǐ yuè* 禮樂 as ‘the arts and institutions of the *civilised* world’ in *LY* 14.11 discussed above.

子畏於匡，曰：文王既沒，文不在茲乎？天之將喪斯文也，後死者不得與於斯文也；天之未喪斯文也，匡人其如予乎？

On one occasion, when Confucius was in fear for his personal safety from the violence of men of a certain place, he said to those about him, “Be not afraid. Since the death of King Wan [who founded this civilization] is not the cause of this **civilisation** with us here now? If God is going to destroy all **civilisation** in the world, it would not have been given to a mortal of this late generation to understand this **civilisation**. But if God is not going to destroy all **civilisation** in the world – what can the people of this place do to me?” (*LY* 9.5, tr. Gū Hóngmíng (1898:67))

Except for the fact that he uses the word *civilisation* rather than *culture*, Gū Hóngmíng’s translation of *LY* 14.11 and 9.5 could be argued to reflect what might be called a ‘proto-culturalist’ or ‘civilizationist’ interpretation of the *Lúnyǔ* as containing a sinocentric view of the Zhōu realm as a ‘culture island.’ As discussed in section 5.2.2 above, Herder’s use of the word *Kultur* was sometimes translated into English as ‘civilization.’ Thus in the 19th century the words *culture* and *civilization* overlapped in meaning and were used interchangeably in some contexts. Legge’s translation of *wén* in *LY* 9.5 as ‘cause of truth’ indicates that he also assumed that Confucius considered the tradition of King Wén as the embodiment of the true value system

³⁸³ Gū Hóngmíng’s translation of *hào xué* as “man of culture” is not very faithful to the original. In contrast, Legge’s (1841:144) translation of *hào xué* in *LY* 1.14 as “to love to learn” is much closer to the meaning of the Old Chinese phrase. I know of no other subsequent translation of the *Lunyu* that adopts Gū Hóngmíng’s rather idiosyncratic translation of *hào xué*.

of human civilization. In other words, one might argue that Legge *could* have translated it as *civilization* or *culture* (as defined by Arnold).³⁸⁴

In sum, given the popularity of the term *culture* as a translation of *wén* in the 20th century, the fact that Legge (1861), Jennings (1895) and Gū Hóngmíng (1898) only translate *wén* as *culture* in three passages may seem a bit surprising, especially since the term *culture* was in the process of being introduced into colloquial English by influential writers such as Matthew Arnold in the late 19th century. However, the majority of Legge's, Jennings' and Gū Hóngmíng's alternative translations of *wén* as 'learning,' 'learned,' 'accomplished,' 'ornament,' 'order of things,' 'regulations' and 'civilization' do appear just as (and in some cases more) philologically sound than later translations of *wén* as *culture*.

Notice also that the word *culture* does not appear in entries for the word *wén* in any of the Chinese-English dictionaries published in the 19th century.³⁸⁵ Thus, renderings of *wén* in translations of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1860 to 1900 largely reflect usage patterns in the English language at the time. It is therefore not so much the paucity of the word *culture* in translations from 1860-1900 that begs an explanation, as it is the surge in the use of the word after 1900.

It is in the fourth period, i.e. the period from 1900 to 1930, that the translation of *wén* as *culture* really took off. To the three instances of *wén* translated as *culture* before 1900, the first three decades of the 20th century added fifteen new instances, bringing the cumulative total to eighteen. The three representative translations from this period are Giles (1907), Lyall (1909) and Soothill (1910).

³⁸⁴ The only later translation that also renders *wén* as *civilization* is Leys (1997).

³⁸⁵ The major 19th century Chinese-English dictionaries consulted here include Medhurst (1843), Morrison (1865) [=Morrison (1815)?], Williams (1889) and Giles's (1892). Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary (Mathews 1931) also does not translate *wén* as 'culture.'

Giles's partial translation of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1907 renders *wén* as *culture* twice, i.e., *LY* 1.6 and *LY* 12.24. Since *wén* in *LY* 12.24 is already translated as *culture* by Legge, the only new use of *culture* to translate *wén* is *LY* 1.6.

子曰：「弟子入則孝，出則悌，謹而信，汎愛眾，而親仁，行有餘力，則以學文。」
At home, a young man should show the qualities of a son; abroad, those of a younger brother. He should be circumspect but truthful. He should have charity in his heart for all men, but associate only with the virtuous. After thus regulating his conduct, his surplus energy should be devoted to literary **culture**. (*LY* 1.6, tr. Giles (1907:53))

Giles' translation of the sentence 行有餘力，則以學文 as 'his surplus energy should be devoted to literary **culture**' leaves it undetermined whether 'literary culture' is intended to translate the phrase *xué wén* 學文 (in which *xué* provides the meaning 'literary,' and *wén* is translated as *culture*) or if it is intended as a translation of *wén* alone (with *yǐ xué* 'translated as 'should be devoted to'). In any case, by modifying *culture* with the adjective *literary*, Giles' translation inserts itself in the tradition of earlier translations of *wén* in *LY* 1.6 as 'learning' (Marshman), 'study' (Collie), 'polite studies' (Legge), 'literary or artistic accomplishments' (Jennings) and 'literary pursuits' (Gū Hóngmíng).³⁸⁶

Lyall (1909) translates fourteen of the twenty-nine instances of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* as *culture*. In the preface to his translation of the *Lúnyǔ*, Lyall (1909) acknowledges that his translation owes a lot to James Legge and Gū Hóngmíng.³⁸⁷ "I am most indebted to Legge's 'Confucian Analects,' a book that is invaluable to the student though defective as a translation.

³⁸⁶ The first unmodified use of *culture* to translate *wén* in *LY* 1.6 does not appear until ninety years later in Huang (1997:48). "[...] If [...] they have energy to spare, they should employ it to acquire culture." In a footnote Huang (1997:48) explains that the word **culture** in this context means the 'Six Arts, namely, the rituals, music, archery, charioteering, language, and arithmetic.'

³⁸⁷ Lyall's translation of the *Analects* was reprinted in Eliot (1910). Curiously, Eliot does not appear to mention that the translation of the *Analects* is by Lyall. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, 'literary accomplishments/pursuits' are not good translations of *wén* in pre-Qín texts. See also Kern (2001).

In the work of finding English equivalents for Chinese words I have been helped most by Mr. Ku Hung-ming's clever translation, 'The Sayings and Discourses of Confucius'" (Lyll 1909:v). Nevertheless, Lyall only follows the lead of previous translators in translating *wén* as *culture* in one passage, i.e., LY 12.24. The other two instances where *wén* is translated as *culture* by Legge and Gū Hóngmíng, Lyall instead translates it as 'graced (with courtesy and music)' (LY 14.12) and 'learning' (LY 16.1), respectively. Thus thirteen out of the total fourteen translations of *wén* as *culture* are innovations by Lyall himself. These thirteen innovations appear in the following nine *Lúnyǔ* passages, which can be grouped together as follows.

Lyall's translation of *wén* as *cultured* in LY 5.13 and LY 14.18 constitute the first occurrences of *wén* as a posthumous title being translated as *cultured*.³⁸⁸

子貢問曰：「孔文子何以謂之文也？」子曰：「敏而好學，不恥下問，是以謂之文也。」
Tzu-kung asked: "Why was K'ung-wén styled **cultured**?" The Master said: "He was quick and fond of learning, not ashamed to ask those beneath him. That is why he was called **cultured**." (LY 5.13, tr. Lyall (1909:20-21))³⁸⁹

公叔文子之臣大夫僎，與文子同升諸公。子聞之曰：「可以為文矣。」
The minister Hsien, once steward to Kung-shu Wen, went to audience of the duke together with Wen. When the Master heard of this, he said: "He is rightly called **Wen (cultured)**." (LY 14.18, tr. Lyall (1909:76))

Earlier translations of *wén* in these passages include 'accomplished' (Legge), 'learned' (Marshman, Collie) and 'talented' (Jennings). The use of *wén* in posthumous titles in pre-Qín texts has been discussed in more detail in chapter 2, where I suggest that 'refined' or 'polished' may be better translations of *wén* in texts from the Zhànguó period. Suffice it to say that Lyall's

³⁸⁸ See also the discussion of these examples in chapter 2.

³⁸⁹ Occurrences of *wén* that are part of proper names are not counted among the twenty-nine occurrences potentially translatable as *culture*. Hence they are not highlighted in **bold** fonts here.

translation of *wén* as ‘cultured’ appears to be based on the Arnoldian concept of ‘culture’ as ‘refinement through study of the wisdom of the Classics.’

Lyall (1909) is also the first to translate the expression *wénzhāng* 文章 as *culture*.

子貢曰：「夫子之文章，可得而聞也；夫子之言性與天道，不可得而聞也。」
Tzu-kung said: “We may listen to the Master’s **culture**; but on life and the ways of Heaven his words are denied us.” (LY 5.13, tr. Lyall (1909:20))

子曰：「大哉！堯之為君也！巍巍乎！唯天為大，唯堯則之！蕩蕩乎，民無能名焉！巍巍乎！其有成功也！煥乎！其有文章。」
The Master said, “How great was Yao in kingship! Sublime! Heaven alone is great; Yao alone was patterned on it! Boundless! Men’s words failed them. Sublime the work he did, dazzling the wealth of his **culture**!” (LY 8.18, tr. Lyall (1909:39))

Earlier translations of *wén* in these passages include ‘excellent conduct’ (Marshman), ‘virtue and elegant manners’ (Collie), ‘personal displays of his principles’ (Legge), ‘literary discourses’ (Jennings) and ‘art and literature’ (Gū Hóngmíng) for LY 5.13, and ‘mode of government’ (Marshman), ‘laws and rites’ (Collie), ‘elegant regulations’ (Legge), ‘scholarly productions’ (Jennings) and ‘arts’ (Gū Hóngmíng) for LY 8.18. The translations of *wénzhāng* in these two passages can be divided into two groups: (i) *wénzhāng* interpreted as the personal refinement of Confucius and Yao; and (ii) *wénzhāng* interpreted as a system of institutions, teachings or practices. Given that *culture* could mean both (i) the personal refinement of an individual, and (ii) the ‘manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively (e.g., arts, institutions, system of ethics, etc.),’ Lyall’s translation of *wénzhāng* as *culture* embodies both these interpretations.³⁹⁰

Lyall also innovates by translating the compound *wénxue* 文學 as ‘culture’ in LY 11.3:

³⁹⁰ As discussed in chapter 2, the exact meaning of the expression *wénzhāng* in LY 5.13 and 8.18 remains highly controversial. For discussion of the term *wénzhāng* in early Chinese texts, see also Kern (2001).

[...] 言語：宰我、子貢；政事：冉有、季路；**文學**：子游、子夏。

[...] Tsai Wo and Tzu-kung were the talkers; statesmen Jan Yu and Chi-lu. Tzu-yu and Tzu-hsia were men of **culture**." (*LY* 11.3, tr. Lyall (1909:51))

Earlier translations of *wénxue* 文學 take the expression to mean ‘literature’ (Collie) or ‘literary acquirements/students/pursuits/attainments’ (Legge, Jennings, Gū Hóngmíng, Giles). As with Giles’ translation of *wén* as ‘(literary) culture’ in *LY* 1.6 discussed above, Lyall’s interpretation of *wénxue* as ‘culture’ in *LY* 11.3 reflects his assumption of a close link between the Arnold’s concept of ‘culture’ and the study of classical texts.³⁹¹

Lyall is also the first to translate a number of nominal uses of *wén* as *culture*. In *LY* 7.24, 7.32 and 9.11 the concept of ‘culture’ intended by Lyall seems to be the Arnoldian notion of personal perfection through study and various edifying endeavors.

子以四教：文、行、忠、信。

The four things the Master taught were **culture**, conduct, faithfulness and truth. (*LY* 7.24, tr. Lyall (1909:33))

子曰：「文，莫吾猶人也。躬行君子，則吾未之有得。」

The Master said: "I have no more **culture** than others: to live as a gentleman is not yet mine." (*LY* 7.32, tr. Lyall (1909:35))

顏淵喟然歎曰：「仰之彌高，鑽之彌堅，瞻之在前，忽焉在後！夫子循循然善誘人，博我以文，約我以禮。[...]」

Yen Yuan heaved a sigh and said: "As I gaze it grows higher, more remote as I dig! I sight it in front, next moment astern! The Master tempts men forward deftly bit by bit. He widened me with **culture**, he bound me with courtesy.[...]" (*LY* 9.11, tr. Lyall (1909:41-42))

Previous translations render *wén* in these passages as ‘literature’ (*LY* 7.24 Marshman, *LY* 7.24 Collie), ‘letters’ (*LY* 7.24/7.32 Legge, 7.32 Jennings), ‘scholarliness’ (*LY* 7.24 Jennings) and ‘knowledge of literature and the arts’ (*LY* 7.24/7.32 Gū Hóngmíng, *LY* 7.24 Giles); ‘learning’

³⁹¹ As discussed in chapter 2 and 3, ‘polite studies’ is probably a better translation of the expression *wénxue* 文學 in this context.

(LY 7.32 Marshman, LY 7.32/9.11 Collie, 9.11 Legge), ‘polite learning’ (LY 9.11 Giles)³⁹², ‘beauty of virtue’ (LY 9.11 Marshman), ‘literary accomplishments’ (LY 7.32 Giles), ‘literary lore’ (LY 9.11 Jennings) and ‘extensive knowledge of the arts’ (LY 9.11 Gū Hóngmíng). As can be seen from this list of earlier translations of LY 7.24, 7.32 and 9.11, the occurrences of *wén* in these passages were considered by 19th century translators to refer to education of the mind and manners through literary studies. Since the Arnold’s concept of *culture* was understood as the product the study of ‘the best that has been known and said in the world,’ Lyall’s translation of *wén* as *culture* in these passages does not represent a radical break with earlier translations.

Finally, Lyall is the first to translate *wén* in LY 9.5 as *culture*.

子畏於匡，曰：文王既沒，文不在茲乎？天之將喪斯文也，後死者不得與於斯文也；天之未喪斯文也，匡人其如予乎？

When the Master was affrighted in K'uang, he said: "Since the death of King Wen, is not this the home of **culture**? Had Heaven condemned **culture**, later mortals had missed their share in **it**. If Heaven uphold **culture**, what can the men of K'uang do to me?" (LY 9.5, tr. Lyall (1909:40-41))

Lyall’s translation of *wén* in this passage still seems to refer to the same Arnoldian concept of ‘refined high culture’ as in LY 7.24, 7.32 and 9.11 above. However, while the occurrences of *wén* in these passages refer to the ‘refined culture’ of a single individual, those in LY 9.5 refer to the ‘culture’ of the Zhōu people as instituted by the early founding kings. The intended meaning of *culture* in this passage thus seems to be more or less the same as the metacultural concept that Gū Hóngmíng (1898) translated as *civilisation*.

³⁹² Note the similarities between Legge’s translation of *wén* as ‘polite studies’ and Giles’ translation of *wén* in these passages as ‘polite learning.’

The next translator to innovate by rendering *wén* as culture is Soothill (1910). Out of the eight translations of *wén* as *culture* in Soothill (1910), only one is an innovation, i.e., *LY* 3.14.³⁹³

子曰：「周監於二代，郁郁乎文哉！吾從周。」

The Master said: “Chou had the advantage of surveying the two preceding dynasties. How replete was its **culture**! I follow Chou.” (*LY* 3.14, tr. Soothill (1910:199))

Earlier translations of *wén* in this passage include ‘regulations’ (Marshman and Legge), ‘adorn’ (Collie), ‘records (of those times)’ (Jennings) and ‘art and literature’ (Gū Hóngmíng). Soothill’s translation of *LY* 3.14 is interesting since it is possibly the first occurrence of *wén* which can be interpreted to refer to the anthropological notion of ‘culture’ as a ‘set of conventionalized practices of a people at a particular location in time and place.’ In this sense it is akin to the earlier translations of *wén* as ‘regulations’ by Marshman and Legge. In the section on terminology, Soothill (1910) includes the following explanation of *wén*:

文 Wên² is used for adornment, polish, **culture**, refinement. VI.12 shews the value to be placed upon it as compared with moral character; 質 substance, character, and 文 decoration, **culture**, are there compared. 文 is spoken of as 詩書六藝之文、The **culture** of Poetry, History, and the Six Arts, (禮樂射御書數、Department, music, archery, driving, writing and numbers.) 斯文 means **culture**, civilization. (Soothill 1910:107-8)

In this lexical explanation of *wén*, Soothill clearly identifies ‘culture’ as one of its central meanings. Interestingly, though he explicitly states that *si wén* 斯文 “means **culture**, civilization,” he still translates *si wén* in *LY* 9.5 as ‘enlightenment.’ Apparently, for Soothill, ‘culture’ in the sense of ‘civilization’ embodied more or less the same meaning as ‘enlightenment.’

³⁹³ See Taam on Soothill. Soothill (1910:78) mentions Intorcetta (1687), Marshman (1809), Collie (1828), Legge (1861) and Gū Hóngmíng (1898) in his list of translations of the *Lúnyǔ*. Interestingly he does not mention Lyall (1909) or Jennings (1895).

In sum, we see a rapid growth in the instances of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* being translated as *culture* in the first decade of the 20th century, adding fifteen new instances and bringing the cumulative total to eighteen instances. While Soothill's use of *culture* in *LY* 3.14 to refer to the 'culture of the Zhōu' may be interpreted as an early use of the anthropological notion of 'culture,' it is more likely that it was intended to refer to the 'civilization of the Zhōu.' That is, all of the new translations of *wén* as *culture* can still be interpreted as being based on the Arnoldian concept of 'culture' as either the 'refinement through arts and literature' of either the individual (=refined tastes and manners) or of humanity (=civilization).

During the fifth period, from 1930s to 1980, the term *culture* was being popularized in the anthropological sense by the works of Mead, Benedict and Boas. It also still retained older uses to refer to Arnold's concept of 'culture,' both as applied to the 'culture' of the individual and to the 'culture' of human civilization in general. In this period, *culture* also began to be used in more watered-out senses, such as *corset culture* (II6b.i) and *culture of the penitentiary* (II6c.i). In other words, during the period from the 1930s to 1980, the term *culture* underwent a great proliferation of meanings. Although Waley (1938) translates *wén* as *culture* fifteen times, Ware (1950)³⁹⁴ eight times, and Lau (1979) thirteen times, together these three translations only contain five innovations.³⁹⁵

Waley appears to be the first to translate the three occurrences of *wén* in *LY* 12.8 as *culture*.

³⁹⁴ As mentioned above, although not identical, the translations found in Ware (1950) and Ware (1955) do not differ with respect to the translations of *wén* as *culture*.

³⁹⁵ Other translations from this period, not discussed here, include Lin (1938), Cheng (1948) and Pound (1956). Lin (1938), which is only a partial translation, does not contain any innovations. Cheng (1948) was published in Shanghai and does not seem to have been very influential. Since Pound (1956) is a rendering based on other translations rather than a direct translation from Old Chinese, it has also been excluded.

棘子成曰：「君子質而已矣，何以文為？」子貢曰：「惜乎！夫子之說，君子也。駟不及舌。文猶質也，質猶文也。虎豹之鞞猶犬羊之鞞。」

Chi Tzu-ch'êng said, A gentleman is a gentleman in virtue of the stuff he is made of. **Culture** cannot make gentleman. Tzu-kung said, I am sorry, Sir, that you should have said that. For the saying goes that 'when a gentleman has spoken, a team of four horses cannot overtake his words.' **Culture** is just as important as inborn qualities; and inborn qualities, no less important than **culture**. Remove the hairs from the skin of a tiger or panther, and what is left looks just like the hairless hide of a dog or sheep. (LY 12.8, tr. Waley (1938:164-5))

Although *wén* in LY 12.8 appears to be used in more or less the same meaning as in LY 6.18, Waley translates *wén* in LY 6.18 as 'ornamentation.' In the glossary of key terms, Waley explains that *wén* in 6.18 refers to 'literature' rather than 'culture': "When we are told that one in whom 'substance preponderates over ornament' (*wên*) will degenerate into a mere savage; while one in whom ornament preponderates over substance degenerates into a mere scribe, it is obvious that the *wên* in question is literature and not culture in general." (Waley 1938:41) However, Waley seems to contradict this statement in his footnote to 6.18, where he explains that the phrase "when natural substance prevails over ornamentation" can be understood as "when nature prevails over culture." In sum, Waley's choice to translate *wén* in LY 6.18 as 'ornamentation' rather than 'culture' seems to be based more on a concern for contextual appropriateness than on any difference in the concept referred to.

In addition to the innovative translation of *wén* as *culture* in LY 12.8, Waley (1938) is also the first *Lúnyǔ* translator to explicitly state that the metacultural concept referred to by *wén* appears to be very similar to the metacultural concept expressed by the English word *culture*:

The original meaning of the word *wên* is criss-cross lines, markings, pattern. [...] *Wên* [...] means what is decorated as opposed to what is plain, ornament as opposed to structure, and hence the things that vary and beautify human life, as opposed to life's concrete needs. In particular, *wên* denotes the arts of peace (music, dancing, literature) as opposed to those of war. [...] They attract the inhabitants of neighbouring countries [...]. 'If the distant do not submit, cultivate the power of *wên* to bring them to you.' [LY 16.1] *It is clear then that wên means something very like our own word culture and served many of the same purposes.* The prestige (*tê*) of **culture** is to-day used by us for military purposes. During the War, for example, efforts were made by both sides to win

over neutrals by displays of **culture**, such as the sending of theatrical companies, pictures and the like. The power of *wên* is also used, as in ancient China, to attract immigrants, but only those of the temporary kind called tourists.

For Confucius the *wên* (**culture**) par excellence was that established by the founders of the Chou dynasty. To gather up the fragments of this **culture** and pass them on to posterity was the sacred mission entrusted to him by Heaven. [LY 9.5] His native State, Lu, was generally regarded as the main depository of Chou **culture** [cf. *Zuozhuan*, “hao gong” 2nd year]. [...]

The earlier English translators were embarrassed by the term *wên*, because although they knew it corresponded to our word ‘**culture**,’ they were entirely unfamiliar with the practical efficacies (*tê*) with which the Chinese associated the word. Legge, indeed, in one passage [LY 9.5] translates *wên* ‘the Cause of truth,’ not being able to convince himself that Confucius could have been interested in transmitting anything so frivolous as a mere ‘**culture**.’” (Waley 1938:39-41, highlights added)

Here Waley’s compares the way LY 16.1 recommends using *wén* to make recalcitrant peoples submit with the way “culture” was used for military purposes during the First World War. Regardless of its validity, such a comparison undoubtedly served to bolster the assumption of a semantic quasi-equivalence of the metacultural concepts referred to by *wén* and *culture*. Soothill (1910:108) had already defined *wén* as “the **culture** of Poetry, History, and the Six Arts, (禮樂射御書數、 Department, music, archery, driving, writing and numbers)” which is very similar to the “arts of peace (music, dancing, literature)” mentioned by Waley in the passage quoted above. In spite of this, Waley (1938) is the first translation of the *Lúnyǔ* where ‘culture’ is explicitly linked to one of the founding rulers of the Zhōu dynasty. Finally, not only did Waley take for granted that *wén* “corresponded to our word ‘culture,’” he also assumed that this insight was shared by earlier translators as far back in time as Legge (1861). Thus, Waley’s (1938) main contribution may have been to establish the equivalence between *wén* and *culture* as a commonly assumed ‘fact.’ From then on, this factoid seems to have taken on a life of its own. Fueled by the introduction of the ‘culturalist paradigm’ in the 1940s and 1950s, the quasi-equation of the metacultural concepts referred to by the expressions *wén* and *culture* now appears to be widely accepted in the early China field.

Lau (1979) seems to have been the first to translate *wén* as *culture* in *LY* 6.27 and 12.15. Since these two passages are almost identical, we shall only discuss *LY* 6.27 here.³⁹⁶

子曰：「君子博學於文，約之以禮，亦可以弗畔矣夫。」

The Master said, ‘The gentleman widely versed in **culture** but brought back to essentials by the rites can, I suppose, be relied upon not to turn against what he stood for.’ (*LY* 6.27, tr. Lau (1979:85))

Earlier translations render *wén* in this passage as ‘learning,’ ‘scholarship,’ ‘literature’ or ‘letters.’ Lau’s innovative translation can be seen as following the same trend found in earlier translations to extend the translation of *wén* as *culture* to instances earlier translated as ‘literature,’ ‘polite studies,’ etc. based on the assumption that ‘culture’ is acquired through study and learning of ‘literature,’ ‘letters’ and ‘the arts.’ By adding two new innovations, Lau brings the cumulative total of instances of *wén* translated as *culture* up to $23/29 = 79.3\%$ by the end of the 1970s.

The sixth period, from the 1990s to the first decade of the 21st century, adds another five instances of *wén* translated as *culture*, so that today twenty-eight of the twenty-nine instances of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* have now been translated, by one scholar or another, as ‘culture.’ Although a number of new translations of the *Lúnyǔ* have emerged over the last two decades, I have only included Dawson (1993), Huang (1997), Leys (1997), Brooks and Brooks (1997), Hinton (1998), Slingerland (2003) and Watson (2007) in Table 2 in section 5.1.

Although Dawson (1993) contains 18 instances of *wén* translated as *culture*, none of these are innovations. Nevertheless, Dawson (1993) still contains an important explanation of the old Chinese term *wén* that situates it firmly in the ‘culturalist paradigm’ view of “China’s” essential differences from “the West.”

³⁹⁶ Except for the omission of the word *jūnzǐ* 君子, *LY* 12.15 repeats *LY* 6.27 verbatim.

Beyond the etymological analysis of *wén* as a word originally meaning ‘decoration’ or ‘ornament’ and its extensions to the cultural ‘adornments of civilizations,’ Dawson explicitly states that the main difference between the civilized Chinese and their barbarian others is a difference of ‘culture.’ He also adopts the culturalist distinction between China as a culturally defined entity as opposed to Western civilization which is defined as the “institutions of cities.” Thus for Dawson, *wén* “refers to all the adornments of **civilization**, which mark the Chinese off from the barbarian; so although it may begin with the decoration on art objects, it develops from that into the refinement of art and literature. This is what differentiated China from neighbouring peoples, for **civilization** (in modern Chinese *wen-hua* or **culture**-transformation) meant the possession of **culture**, whereas from the Western point of view **civilization** originally referred to the institutions of cities as the mark of distinction from more primitive peoples” (Dawson 1993:xxv).

Dawson’s equation of English *civilization* and the modern Chinese word *wénhuà* is problematic on many levels; as is his semantic gloss of *wénhuà* as “culture-transformation.” First, the English words *civilization* and *culture* are usually translated into modern Chinese as *wénming* and *wénhuà*, respectively. Second, his explanation of the modern Chinese word *wénhuà* as ‘culture transformation’ is anachronistic. The expression *wénhuà* is attested in the meaning ‘to transform through *wén*’ in Han dynasty texts. However, the modern Chinese word *wénhuà* does not derive directly from these ancient Chinese uses of the phrasal expression *wén huà*. Instead, it originated as a Japanese loan word coined (from morphemes of Chinese origin) to translate German *Kultur*, French *culture*, and English *culture* in the 19th century and was introduced into Modern Chinese via Japanese.³⁹⁷ Thus, most modern uses of the word *wénhuà* refer to metacultural concepts originating in the West, e.g., the Arnoldian concept of ‘high culture,’ the

³⁹⁷ See Wáng Lì 王力 (1980:598-603).

anthropological concept of ‘culture,’ etc. Assuming that the *wén* in *wénhuà* still refers to the same metacultural concepts as Old Chinese *wén* thus falls into the culturalist view of a monolithic “Chinese culture” which is supposed to have remained more or less the same for the last two or three millennia.³⁹⁸

Finally, Dawson’s suggestion that King Wén was “posthumously known as the ‘cultured king’” (Dawson 1993:xxv)—because he founded the Zhōu dynasty whose ‘culture’ allegedly laid the foundation for later dynastic traditions and served to distinguish the civilized “Chinese” from the “barbarian”—is yet another example of a culturalist reinterpretation of the past. As shown in chapter 2, *wén* did not have metacultural meanings in the pre-500 BCE period. Instead it was used as a positive epithet describing venerated ancestors, and it probably meant something like ‘splendid’ or ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful,’ rather than ‘accomplished,’ as suggested by Legge (1861) and Falkenhausen (1996). Furthermore, it is likely that King Wén was called *wén* already in his lifetime. In other words, *wén* was probably neither King Wén’s posthumous name, nor did it mean ‘cultured’ in Western Zhōu usage.³⁹⁹ In sum, rather than being based on philological analysis of the uses and meanings of *wén* in royal names and posthumous titles in the period from the Western Zhōu down to the time of Confucius, Dawson’s translation of King Wén as ‘the cultured king’ is probably more the product of a combination of culturalist thinking applied to the alleged founder of “Chinese culture” and an implicit assumption of semantic equivalence between Old Chinese *wén* and Modern English *culture*.

³⁹⁸ The various uses and meanings of the term *wénhuà* in modern Chinese is a highly interesting topic. However, since the present discussion focuses on the meanings of *wén* in Old Chinese, I shall not pursue it here. The reader is referred to the insightful analysis of the uses and abuses of translation in diplomatic exchanges between China and Western powers in Liu (2004).

³⁹⁹ For a fuller analysis of the uses of *wén* in names and posthumous titles, see section 2.1 in chapter 2.

Leys (1997) is the first to translate *wén* as *culture* in LY 6.18. However, since Hinton's (1998a) translation is published just one year after Leys', it likely represents an independent innovation.

子曰：「質勝文則野，文勝質則史，文質彬彬，然後君子。」

The Master said: “When nature prevails over **culture**, you get a savage; when **culture** prevails over nature, you get a pedant. When nature and **culture** are in balance, you get a gentleman.” (LY 6.18, tr. Leys (1997))

The Master said: “People are too wild when nature dominates **culture** in them, and too tame when **culture** dominates nature. But when nature and **culture** are blended and balanced in them, they're noble-minded.” (LY 6.18, tr. Hinton (1998a:59))

As noted in the discussion of 12.8 above, although Waley (1938) translates *wén* as ‘ornamentation’ in LY 6.18, he adds a footnote explaining that the phrase “when natural substance prevails over ornamentation” can be understood as “when nature prevails over culture.” Rather than being an independent innovation, it is possible that Leys bases his translation of *wén* as *culture* on this footnote in Waley (1938)⁴⁰⁰, especially since Leys explicitly recognizes his debt to Waley (1938) by mentioning it among the translations of the *Lúnyǔ* that he has “consulted and referred to more frequently.” (Leys 1997:xiii)

Leys (1997) also innovates by using the words *civilization* and *civilized* to translate *wén* in many passages where other translations use *culture* and *cultured*. He translates *wén* as “civilization” in LY 3.14, 9.5a, 9.5b, (9.5c), 9.9d, 16.1 and as “civilized” in LY 5.15a, 5.15b, 14.18. He also translates *wén* as *culture* nine times: LY 5.13, 6.18a, 6.18b, 6.18c, 11.3, 12.8a, 12.8b, 12.8c, 12.24. Interestingly, Leys distinguishes between the metacultural concept of *wén*

⁴⁰⁰ Indeed, as discussed above, Soothill (1910) already mentions the possibility of translating *wén* in 6.18 as *culture* in his glossary definition of the term *wén*: “文 Wên² is used for adornment, polish, **culture**, refinement. VI.12 shews the value to be placed upon it as compared with moral character; 質 substance, character, and 文 decoration, **culture**, are there compared.” (Soothill 1910:107-8) However, Leys (1997) and Hinton (1998) are the first translations that render *wén* as *culture* in the main translation of this passage, rather than in footnotes.

applied to the individual, which he translates as *culture*, and the metacultural concept of *wén* applied to society in general, which he translates as *civilization* (e.g., *LY* 3.14, 9.5, and 16.1). Having grown up in Belgium and being a fluent French speaker (and having already produced a French translation of the *Lúnyǔ*), Simon Leys (whose real name is Pierre Ryckmans; Simon Leys being a pseudonym) may have been influenced by French usage of the terms *culture* and *civilization*.

Brooks and Brooks (1997) contains a creative translation of *wén* as *culture* in *LY* 19.8.

子夏曰：「小人之過也必文。」

Dž-syà said, The mistakes of the little people will always be in the direction of **culture**. (*LY* 6.18, tr. Brooks and Brooks (1997:186))

All previous English translations and, to the best of my knowledge, all traditional Chinese commentaries and modern Chinese translations, take *wén* in 19.8 to be a verb meaning ‘to cover up’ or ‘to gloss over.’ Since one of the basic meanings of *wén* is indeed ‘to decorate,’ such a translation is well supported. As discussed in chapter 3, the pre-Qín corpus contains other examples of *wén* used to mean ‘cover up’ or ‘dress up something’ to appear better than it is. Nevertheless, Brooks and Brooks’ translation seems to have at least some merit. Since the ‘morally superior person’ (*jūnzǐ*) is, as discussed in chapter 2, the human embodiment of *wén*, it makes sense that his opposite, the petty person, would tend to err with respect to *wén*. Furthermore, since *LY* 11.3 specifically states that Zixia is known for his mastery of ‘polite studies’ (*wén xue*), it only seems natural that he should be criticizing ‘petty people’ (*xiao ren* 小人), translated by Brooks and Brooks as ‘the little people,’ for erring with respect to *wén*. In the *Lúnyǔ* mastery of *wén* goes beyond mastery of ‘polite studies.’ Being *wén* means that one knows how to behave according to the ‘refined patterns’ of the Zhou tradition. Through long years of

practice, these patterns eventually become second nature. At that point, the moral perfection of one's actions and demeanor will be *wén*. In contrast, not having undergone this process of moral edification, the petty man will err with respect to *wén*. That is, since he has not been trained in the refined patterns' of the Zhou tradition, he will make mistakes that betray his lack of mastery of *wén*.

Although Slingerland (2003a) contains a higher number of instances of *wén* translated as *culture* (total 27/29) than any other translation of the *Lúnyǔ*, it only adds one new original translation of *wén* as *culture*, bringing the cumulative total up to 28/29.

子曰：「夏禮，吾能言之，杞不足徵也；殷禮，吾能言之，宋不足徵也。文獻不足故也，足則吾能徵之矣。」

The Master said, “As for the rites of the Xia Dynasty, I can speak of them, but there is little remaining in the State of Qii⁴⁰¹ to document them. As for the rites of the Shang Dynasty, I can speak of them, but there is little remaining in the state of Song to document them. This is because there is not much in the way of **culture** or moral worthies [*sic*] left in either state. If there were something there, then I would be able to document them. (*LY* 3.9, tr. Slingerland (2003a:20))

In the explanatory note to *LY* 3.9 Slingerland clarifies that *wén* refers to “**cultural tradition.**” Thus neither Qii nor Song “was successful in preserving their cultural traditions, unlike the state of Lu—the home of the Zhōu **cultural tradition**—where the essence of Zhōu **culture** could still be found” (Slingerland 2003:20). Virtually all previous translations of this passage render *wén* *xian* 文獻 as ‘records,’ ‘documents,’ ‘books,’ and ‘literature’ (*wén* 文) and ‘men of merit,’ ‘wise men,’ ‘learned men,’ ‘men of erudition,’ ‘scholars,’ and ‘worthies’ (*xian* 獻). Since *wén* can indeed refer to ‘written graphs’ and ‘writing,’ the traditional understanding of *wén* in *LY* 3.9 as ‘records’ is probably better here.

⁴⁰¹ Here Slingerland uses the spelling <Qii>, to distinguish Qǐ 杞 from Qí 齊. Since Slingerland does not use tone diacritics, both states would have been spelled the same.

The glossary of terms at the end of Slingerland (2003) provides a detailed explanation of the term *wén*:

Literally referring to writing⁴⁰², *wen* often serves in the *Analects* as a general term pertaining to the sort of **acculturation** – training in ritual, the classics, music, etc. – acquired by someone following the Confucian Way (6.27, 9.5). In this respect, it is often portrayed metaphorically as a kind of adornment or refinement of the “native substance” (*zhi* 質) an uneducated brings to the process of **acculturation**. It is often emphasized that **cultural** refinement requires suitable substrate of native substance, as in 3.8, where *wen* is compared to cosmetics applied to a beautiful face, but ultimately a proper balance between the two must be struck (6.18, 12.8). Sometimes *wen* is also used in the more narrow sense of a set of specific practices like those later formalized as the so-called “six arts” of ritual, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and mathematics, in which any gentleman was trained (see 1.6; similar to the sense of *yi* 藝, “arts,” in 7.6).

Although Slingerland translates *wén* as *culture* in twenty-seven out of twenty-nine instances, he still carefully points out that the referent of *wén* should often be understood as referring to the various skills and arts belonging to the curriculum of the *jūnzǐ*. The relatively high number of translations of *wén* as *culture* may thus be ascribed to a desire to capture as many different senses of *wén* with a single English term as possible. However, in the case of *LY* 3.9, Slingerland’s apparent attempt to consistently translate *wén* as *culture* does end up seeming a bit contrived.

Over the last one-and-a-half centuries since Legge (1861) introduced *culture* as a possible translation of *wén* in *LY* 12.24 and *LY* 16.1, the tendency has been to translate more and more instances of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* as *culture*. Today, the only occurrence of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* which has not yet been translated as *culture* is *LY* 15.26. Most commentators and translators take *wén* to refer to a word or graph in this passage, as illustrated by Slingerland’s (2003) translation provided here:

⁴⁰² As argued by Kern (2001), *wén* probably does not come to refer to ‘writing’ until later.

子曰：「吾猶及史之闕文也，有馬者借人乘之。今亡矣夫！」

The Master said, “I once knew a time when scribes [who did not know how to write a word] would leave the **text** blank, and those who owned horses [that they could not tame themselves] would lend them to others. Nowadays, there is no one like this.” (LY 15.26, tr. Slingerland (2003:184))

Dawson’s (1993:62) creative translation of 吾猶及史之闕文也 as “I am just as good as a clerk with gaps in **his refinement**” opens up the possibility for translating *wén* as *culture* even in this passage. As discussed above, in LY 6.18 and LY 12.8 *wén* is often translated as ‘refinement,’ ‘culture’ or ‘cultural refinement.’ Dawson himself translates *wén* as ‘culture’ in LY 12.8 and ‘refinement’ in LY 6.18. However, according to his own definition of the word *wén* as referring to ‘culture’ as the ‘refinement’ of a person discussed above, he could have translated *wén* as ‘culture’ in both LY 6.18 and LY 12.8. By extending this logic, and if one accepts Dawson’s translation of LY 15.25 as “I am just as good as a clerk with gaps in his refinement,” it would also have been possible for him to translate LY 15.25 as “I am just as good as a clerk with gaps in his **culture**.” While no one has proposed such a translation, this example shows how the word *culture* could potentially be used to translate all twenty-nine instances of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ*.

In this section I have analyzed the chronological introduction of new translations of the twenty-nine occurrences of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* as *culture*, from Legge (1861) to Slingerland (2003). This study reveals that instances of *wén* used in different meanings in the *Lúnyǔ* were first translated as *culture* at different points in time. The first instances of *wén* translated as *culture* in the 19th century referred to the ‘high culture’ of an individual (e.g., LY 12.14, 16.1, 14.12). In the 20th century, *culture* in the meaning ‘civilization’ became more frequently used (e.g., LY 9.5, 3.14, etc.). Finally, towards the end of the 20th century, *culture* was used in creative translations of *wén* and used in meanings which have not been traditionally interpreted as metacultural (e.g., LY 19.8, 3.9, etc.).

I have also argued that the increasing use of the word *culture* to translate *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* can be linked to an increase in the popularity of the term *culture* in the English language in general and in Chinese studies in particular. This analysis has shown that the overall frequency of the term *culture* in translations of the *Lúnyǔ* tends to piggy-back on the general linguistic evolution of the English language, as well as on ‘culturalist’ trends in the fields of Chinese history and anthropology. Finally I have suggested that, in the field of Chinese studies, the increased use of the word *culture* to translate *wén* may be due to influences of culturalist thinking in the establishment of a problematic assumption of semantic equivalence between *wén* and *culture*.

Table 3 below summarizes the chronological introduction of new translations of *wén* as *culture* in the *Lúnyǔ* over the last 150 years. The first column lists the names of the translators and the year of publication. Columns two and three indicate the number of times the word *culture* is used to translate *wén* in each translation and the corresponding percentage. The fourth column lists the passages in the *Lúnyǔ* in which *wén* is translated as *culture* for the first time. The fifth and sixth columns indicate the cumulative count and percentage of translations of *wén* at the time of publication.

Table 3. Total chronological ‘accumulation’ of translations of *wén* as *culture* in the *Lúnyǔ*.

Translation	<i>wén</i> as <i>culture</i> per translation		<i>Lúnyǔ</i> passages containing <i>wén</i> translated as <i>culture</i> for the first time	<i>wén</i> as <i>culture</i> cumulative	
	#	%		#	%
Legge (1861)	2	6.9	12.24, 16.1	2	6.9
Gū Hóngmíng (1898)	1	3.4	14.12	3	10.3
Giles (1907)	2	6.9	1.6	4	13.8
Lyll (1909)	14	48.3	5.13, 5.15a, 5.15b, 7.24, 7.32, 8.18, 9.5a, 9.5b, (9.5c), 9.5d, 9.11, 11.3, 14.18	17	58.6
Soothill (1910)	8	28.6	3.14	18	62.1

Waley (1938)	15	51.7	12.8a, 12.8b, 12.8c	21	72.4
Lau (1979)	13	44.8	6.27, 12.15	23	79.3
Brooks and Brooks (1997)	20	69	19.8	24	82.8
Leys (1997); Hinton (1998)	9 22	31 75.9	6.18a, 6.18b, 6.18c	27	93.1
Slingerland (2003)	27	93.1	3.9	28	96.5

Using Waley (1938) as an example, Table 3 can be explained as follows. Columns two and three show that Waley’s translation of the *Lúnyǔ* contains fifteen instances of *wén* translated as *culture*, which account for $15/29 = 51.7\%$. Column four shows that at the time of publication in 1938, Waley was the first *Lúnyǔ* translator to render the three instances of *wén* in *LY* 12.8 as *culture*. Added to the eighteen ‘innovations’ by earlier translators, this yields a cumulative count of twenty-one and a total percentage of 72.4 of the twenty-nine occurrences of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ*, as indicated in the last two columns of Table 3.

The chronological introduction of new translations of *wén* as *culture*, traced in column four in Table 3, can be shown to correspond to an expansion of the meanings in the polysemic field of the term *culture* in the English language over the last three centuries.⁴⁰³ First, in the period from Legge (1861) to Giles (1907), the instances of *wén* translated as *culture* seem to be limited to the notion of personal culture (i.e., *LY* 12.24, 16.1 [ruler’s ‘civil culture’], 14.12) or the curriculum of classics used in this education (i.e., *LY* 1.6). The use of the word *culture* to refer to personal refinement of knowledge and manners through education in arts and classical literature was one of the most common in 19th century usage. So the fact that the first translations of *wén* as *culture* in the *Lúnyǔ* should have this meaning is not surprising. Needless to say, these two uses of the word *culture* are also attested in innovations from later periods, e.g., *LY* 11.3 (‘culture’

⁴⁰³ See the description of the historical development of the many meanings of the term *culture* in section 5.2 and figure 13.

of the individual) and *LY* 6.27, 12.15, 7.24, 7.32, 9.11 ('culture' as curriculum). 'Culture' as the attribute of an individual is also found in later translations by Lyall (1909) of *wén* in posthumous titles as 'cultured' in *LY* 5.15 and *LY* 14.18; and his translations of *wénzhang* as *culture* in *LY* 5.13 and *LY* 8.18.

Second, with Lyall's (1909) translation of *wén* as *culture* in *LY* 9.5 and *LY* 3.14, the word *culture* begins to be used to refer to the 'culture' of the Zhōu people or 'civilization' established by the early Zhōu kings. Although the use of the word *culture* to refer to collective the artistic and moral development of human civilization predates the 19th century, it was not until the end of the 19th century that this use became popularized in works such as Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*. It is thus not surprising that this should be the second meaning of *culture* to be introduced in translations of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* around the beginning of the 20th century.

Third, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the use of *culture* to translate *wén* in the sense of 'cultural decoration, ornamentation, or refinement' in *LY* 6.18 and 12.8 does not appear before Waley (1938) and Leys (1997). Perhaps the explanation for the relative late appearance of *culture* as translation of *wén* in these cases is that these occurrences of *wén* appear to retain the basic meaning of *wén*, i.e., 'pattern,' 'decoration,' and 'ornamentation.' Since the word *culture* originated from the Latin verb *colere*, meaning 'to grow, cultivate,' it does not have the meanings 'decoration' or 'ornamentation.' Thus, as mentioned above, Waley only translates *wén* in 12.8 as *culture*, and he renders *wén* in 6.18 as 'ornament(-ation).' Indeed, *wén* in 6.18 is not translated as *culture* before the late 1990s in Leys (1997) and Hinton (1998), with most previous translators preferring 'refinement.' Interestingly, the reluctance to translate *wén* as *culture* in 6.18 may due to the fact that *wén* clearly retains the meanings of 'externally visible decorative pattern' in this context. As argued in the discussion of the *Mengzi* in chapter 3, since

metacultural *culture* derives from a word that means ‘to grow [plants, crops]’ it is not a good translation of *wén*, since it clashes with its metaphorical connotations.

Fourth, the period from the 1990s to the present day introduces three creative new translations of *wén* as *culture*. During this period the use of the word *culture* in the English language in general also reaches its peak. Furthermore, the assumed equivalence of *wén* and *culture* suggested by Waley (1938) had already had time to develop into a factoid. These developments, and a general wish to achieve a uniform translation of *wén*, may have driven some translators of the *Lúnyǔ* to propose creative ways to translate even the most recalcitrant instances of *wén* as *culture*. Brooks and Brooks (1997) appear to be the first to translate *wén* as *culture* in *LY* 19.8, which all previous translations parse as a verb meaning to ‘gloss over’ or ‘cover up (mistakes).’ Slingerland’s (2003) suggested translation of *wén* as *culture* in *LY* 3.9, where all previous translations have rendered the phrase *wén xiàn* as ‘records and wise men,’ is perhaps even more creative. Both innovations may potentially be explained as an attempt to translate *wén* as *culture* as consistently as possible. Finally, although Dawson (1993) translates *wén* as refinement in *LY* 15.25, his translation of *wén* as culture in *LY* 12.8, as well as his own definition of *wén* as the ‘culture’ or ‘refinement’ of a person, allows for the extrapolation of the translation of *wén* as *culture* to *LY* 15.26 as well. In sum, although internally different, *LY* 3.9, 15.26 and 19.8 are the last set of instances of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* to be translated as *culture*. Only when use of the term *culture* had peaked, both in the English language in general and in the field of Chinese studies in particular, did it become conceivable to translate these occurrences of *wén* as culture.

Table 3 thus traces the expansion of the use of *culture* as a translation of *wén* in two ways: (i) qualitatively, by indicating the specific innovative translations in column four, and (ii)

numerically, by indicating the increase in the cumulative number of times *wén* is translated in the *Lúnyǔ* in columns five and six.

Another way the chronological study of translations of *wén* as *culture* can be approached consists in tracing and comparing the average number of times the word *culture* is used to render *wén* in translations from each of the six different periods in the development of metacultural uses of the English word *culture* from 1800 to 2007. The data on which this approach is based is summarized in Table 4 below. The first column indicates the six stages in the lexical development of the term *culture*. The second column lists the individual translations from each period. Since the translations from before 1850 are few and far between, even partial translations from this period have been included. However, after 1860 only complete translations of the *Lúnyǔ* have been included. Columns three and four indicate the number of times and the percentage that the word *culture* is used to translate *wén* in each translation. These individual counts are the basis of the average counts per period in column 5 and the corresponding percentages in column 6.

Table 4. Average number of *wén* as *culture* in the *Lúnyǔ* per period.

Period	Translator (year)	Per trans.		Avg. for period	
		#	%	C	%
(i) 1691-1800	Intorcetta (1691)	0	0	0	0 / 1800
(ii) 1800-1860	Marshman (1809)	0	0	0	0 / 1830
	Collie (1870 [1828])	0	0		
	Barnard (1855)	0	0		
(iii) 1860-1900	Legge (1861)	2	6.9	1	3.4/1880
	Jennings (1895)	0	0		
	Gū Hóngmíng (1898)	1	3.4		
(iv) 1900-1930	Lyall (1909)	14	48.3	11	37.9/1915
	Soothill (1910)	8	28.6		
(v) 1930-1990	Waley (1938)	17	58.7	15	51.7/1960
	Ware (1950)	15	51.7		
	Lau (1979)	13	44.8		
	Dawson (1993)	18	62.1		

(vi)	1990-2007	Leys (1997)	9	31	17.4	59.9/1998
		Brooks and Brooks (1997)	20	69		
		Huang (1997)	15	51.7		
		Hinton (1998a)	22	75.9		
		Ames and Rosemont (1998)	12	41.4		
		Slingerland (2003a)	27	93.1		
		Watson (2007)	16	55.2		

The chart in Figure 14 below indicates the increase in the use of *culture* to translate *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ* both in individual translations (= red graph, based on the counts of *culture* in individual translations indicated in column 3 in Table 4 = Figure 11) and in the averages per time period (green graph, based on the counts in column 5 in Table 4). Each of the six dots on which the green graph is based is placed on the x-axis at the median year for each period indicated in column 6 in Table 4.

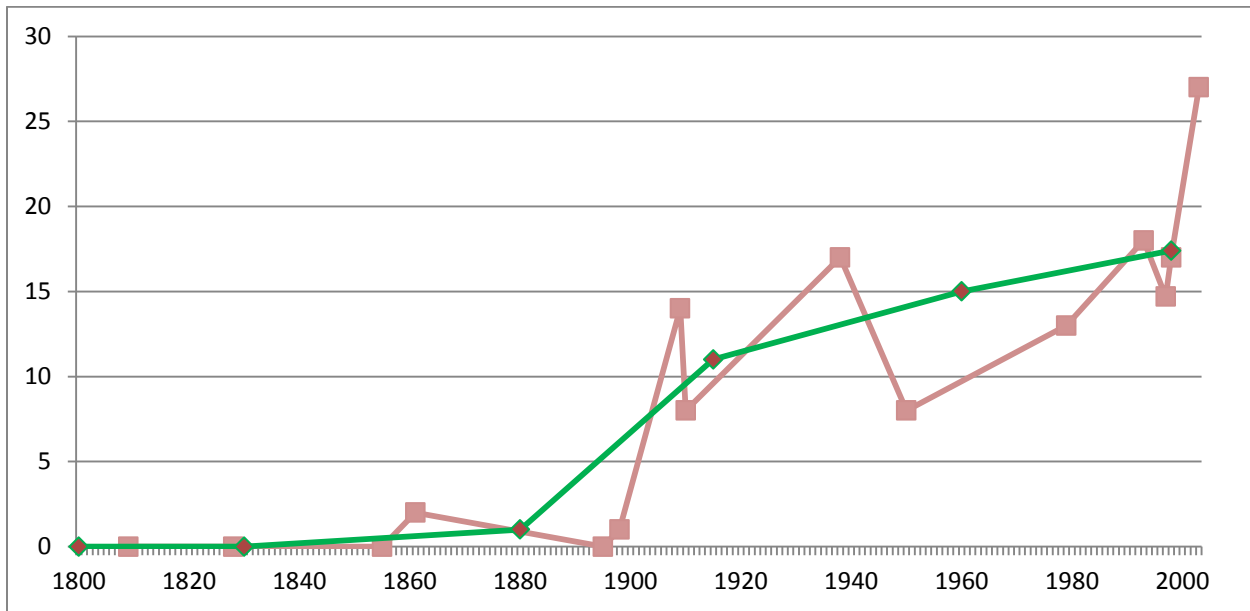


Figure 14. *Wén* as *culture* in individual translations (red) and average per period (green).⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁴ The red graph is the one connecting the large squares. The blue graph connects the smaller squares.

The green graph in Figure 14 illustrates the striking increase in the frequency of the term *culture* in translations of the *Lúnyǔ* over the six time periods from 1800 to 2007.

The green graph for *wén* translated as *culture* in Figure 14 are very low in the 19th century, but experience significant growth in the period from 1900 to 1940, and again from 1990 to the present. What this shows is that the translations of the *Lúnyǔ* are products of the time periods in which they were produced, and that the translators followed the general linguistic usage patterns of the periods in which they lived. Introduced through the works of influential writers such as Arnold and Tylor during the latter half of the 19th century, metacultural uses of *culture* contributed to the increased frequency of the term in the early decades of the 20th century. Hence the increase in the translations of *wén* as *culture* in the *Lúnyǔ* reflects the fact that the term *culture* was becoming more widely used in the English language in general. The second increase in the use of *culture* in the English language in general, as well as in translations of *wén* in the *Lúnyǔ*, coincides with a ‘cultural turn’ in the social sciences and with the flourishing of the field of “cultural studies” in the 1990s, as well as with the introduction of new uses of the term *culture* in colloquial usage (e.g., *culture of corruption* and *chimpanzee cultures*).⁴⁰⁵ While the observation that translations of the *Lúnyǔ* follow the general usage patterns of the English language of their time may seem trivial at first glance, it in fact has profound implications for the way the Old Chinese metacultural terms in pre-Qín texts (e.g., *wén*, *sú*, etc.) are understood by scholars working on early China.

⁴⁰⁵ Steinmetz (1999:2) provides a succinct definition of the term ‘cultural turn’: “Rather than argue for a specific theory of meaning and interpretation, the cultural turn in the social sciences involves a more general assertion of the constitutive role of culture. It is directed against still-powerful social-science paradigms that present meaning and subjectivity as epiphenomenal or causally unimportant. [...] [A]ll theorists who insist on culture’s socially constitutive role, who reject assumptions of cultural homogeneity as an analytical starting point, can be seen as part of a common ‘culturalist’ project, regardless of whether they conceptualize culture in linguistic, poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, or hermeneutic terms.”

As mentioned in the discussion of culturalism in section 5.3, Fairbank's and Levenson's idea of an unchanging monolithic Chinese 'culture' was assumed to be grounded in a 'Confucian' tradition dating back to antiquity.⁴⁰⁶ Traditionally viewed as containing the words of wisdom of Confucius himself, the *Lúnyǔ* has been revered as one of the most important texts of this tradition. In the culturalist paradigm, the *Lúnyǔ* is thus seen as one of the foundational scriptures and ideological fountainheads of the unchanging entity referred to as "Chinese culture." The increasing tendency to translate *wén* as *culture* is therefore potentially problematic, since it contributes to the assumption that the *Lúnyǔ* lays out a 'culturalist' ideology. The relatively prominent place of the term *culture* in recent translations of the *Lúnyǔ* may lead modern readers to believe that 'culture' plays a central role in the text, as well as in pre-Qín thought in general.

While metacultural uses of *wén* do appear in the *Lúnyǔ*, as discussed in more detail in chapter 2, the Old Chinese metacultural concepts referred to are the crystallizations of a metacultural consciousness very different from the cultural consciousness of Western modernity that led to the emergence of the various metacultural uses of the term *culture* in 20th and 21st century Modern English. Both *culture* and *wén* are thus parochial constructions with specific fields of meanings that emerged and were lexicalized in response to changing socio-political contexts. By reinforcing the assumed equivalence of *culture* and *wén*, recent translations of the *Lúnyǔ* may thus, intentionally or not, contribute to 'confirming' the culturalist assumption that the *Lúnyǔ* is one of the cornerstones of "Chinese culture."

I suggest that many of the hermeneutical problems related to translating metacultural *wén* can be obviated, or at least mitigated, by the theory of lexicalized metaculture proposed here. That is, although one might be tempted to ask which translation of *wén* is best, I will suggest that

⁴⁰⁶ As pointed out by Nylan (2001) and Zufferey (2003), the use of terms such as "Confucian" and "Confucianism" in descriptions of pre-Qín thought is problematic.

this question is based on a simplistic notion of translation. Rather than simply choosing between different translations of *wén* listed in various Chinese-English dictionaries, I suggest that a better approach to understanding the concepts behind this term consists in mapping and analyzing the internal structure of the entire semantic field through a comprehensive study of the full range of uses of this term in pre-Qín texts, as illustrated in chapters 2 and 3.

5.5 Conclusion

The Modern English metacultural concepts of ‘culture,’ which developed over the course of the last three centuries, are idiosyncratic concepts which are not semantically equivalent to the metacultural concepts referred to by the term *wén* in pre-Qín texts. In this sense, ‘culture’ is something that is ‘found in translation.’ That is, an artifact of the translation process rather than something that was actually present in pre-Qín texts.

In the case study presented in this chapter, I have traced the striking increase in the use of the word *culture* to render *wén* in English translations of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1691 to 2007. Over the last 200 years, the percentage of the twenty-nine instances of *wén* translated as *culture* has gone from zero to 28/29 or 96.5% (see Table 3 in section 5.4). Overall, the expansion of the use of *culture* to translate *wén* can be shown to have piggy-backed on the proliferation of meanings of the term *culture* and on the concomitant increase in its frequency in the English language in general and as an analytical category in the humanities and social sciences. Thus the increase in the use of the word *culture* to render *wén* should be explained as being triggered by lexical changes in the English language and in the theoretical terminology in the humanities, rather than ascribed solely to advances in our understanding of the Old Chinese texts themselves. This analysis of lexicalized metaculture in translation has served to illustrate several aspects of the

linguistic anthropological approach to intellectual history through vocabulary changes outlined here.

First, the brief study of the emergence of metacultural uses of the term *culture* in section 5.2 shows that the crystallization of cultural consciousness into lexicalized concepts is a historical process that can only be fully understood when considered in its particular socio-economic context. Who were the people who felt the need to exchange ideas about ‘high culture’ and the anthropological concept of ‘culture’ as the way of life of a specific group at a specific time and place? What were the historical changes in thought and socio-political context that made these concepts important? Here we observed the role that Western modernity and colonialism played in making ‘culture’ a central part of the ideological legitimization of Western imperialism. In chapters 2, 3 and 4, I employed the same method to analyze the emergence of lexicalized metaculture in the pre-Qín period as a historical problem by identifying specific socio-political and intellectual factors that enabled and motivated the formulation and circulation of theories of moral philosophy and statecraft in which metacultural concepts played a central role.

Second, by showing how the abstract metacultural uses of the term *culture* constitute organic outgrowths of a larger set of more concrete meanings, I argue that we need a more holistic theory of word meaning than the default theory, illustrated by Mathews’ Chinese-English dictionary, that a word has a list of more or less unrelated meanings. To understand the meanings and full set of associations of the various metacultural uses of *culture*, we need to understand the current polysemy of the term as the result of diachronic processes of derivation giving rise to a set of historically related meanings that still continue to inform one another. Again, this approach was central to the analysis of the meanings and uses of metacultural *wén* in chapters 2 and 3.

Third, the discussion of the emergence of metacultural uses of *culture* and the uses and abuses of the term in the culturalist paradigm in Chinese studies touches on the larger issue of the pitfalls related to using *culture* as a universally applicable analytical category when studying the construction of ‘cultural identities’ and ‘cultural consciousness’ in pre-modern societies. Since both *culture* and *wén* are language-specific parochial constructions that emerged in the communication of ideas between individuals living in widely different socio-political settings, neither of them has any claim to universality. I thus share Farquhar and Hevia’s aim of “allowing cross-cultural study to question the categories into which modernist thought has sorted the human subject” (Farquhar and Hevia 1993:489). Using the term *culture* to analyze collective metacultural consciousness in the pre-Qín period is just as problematic as using the Old Chinese term *wén* to discuss contemporary American ‘culture.’ In spite of this, largely unqualified use of the term *culture* is still widespread in recent studies of ‘cultural identity’ in early China. Given the fact that the field of China studies has been heavily influenced by the ‘culturalist paradigm’ introduced by Fairbank, Levenson and Parsons—which continues to exert influence despite being thoroughly criticized—scholars working on “Chinese culture” and “identity” must be particularly careful when using the term *culture* as an analytical category. Needless to say, I am not claiming that all studies that use *culture* as an analytical category are fatally flawed. Indeed, a number of recent studies of early “Chinese identity,” e.g., Kim (2009) and Beecroft (2010), provide highly valuable analyses and insights in spite of their unspecified use of the terms *culture* and *cultural identity*. What I *do* argue is that reconstructing the Old Chinese metacultural concepts and terms as they are used in the extant body of pre-Qín texts will allow us to salvage these insights from being perceived (rightfully or wrongfully) as tainted with problematic assumptions of the ‘culturalist paradigm.’

Fourth, approaching the lexicalization of metaculture as a historical problem allows us to move the study of ‘culture’ out of the abstract realm of the timeless notion of **Culture** and into the realm of **History** where it belongs.⁴⁰⁷ By assuming “Chinese culture” to exist as an unchanging monolithic entity beyond time and place, culturalist historians such as Fairbank and Levenson place themselves on the slippery slope of essentialism.⁴⁰⁸ Since lexicalization is a historical process that involves finding suitable linguistic expressions for new concepts, it offers a way to anchor changes in metacultural concepts and collective metacultural consciousness in the socio-political context in which the new terms emerged. As was shown in the analysis of *wén* in chapters 2 and 3, the metacultural concepts referred to by these terms were used differently by different groups. Speaking of the concept of ‘culture’ in pre-Qín period as a unitary phenomenon is thus highly misleading. Although the pre-Qín thinkers and masters of statecraft all shared the same vocabulary, the different segments of the linguistic community using the written form of Old Chinese to communicate their ideas had widely different ideas about the value of the metacultural concepts referred to by *wén*. Careful analysis of the chronological order of introduction of various metacultural concepts, and the fragmented nature of the community sharing the same written medium, allows us to capture the full complexity of this sequential and partial crystallization of metacultural consciousness as a historical phenomenon.

⁴⁰⁷ Here I use the terms “**Culture**” and “**History**” in the sense defined by Farquhar and Hevia (Farquhar and Hevia 1993), as discussed in section 5.3.

⁴⁰⁸ Barlow (1993:239) has also observed the close links between Fairbank’s culturalist assumptions and his essentialist approach to identity: “Dividing in half allowed Fairbank to center not just the “West,” but also the other, “China”; and if “China” started to wobble, then the other of the Han, the “Manchu”; [...] When Fairbank attempted to explain difference, he turned to “culture,” and once he did that he could not help but homogenize (or essentialize) both his halves.”

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Too little attention has been paid to the metacultural concepts and terminology present in the pre-Qín texts themselves. While there are numerous studies on different aspects of *wén*,⁴⁰⁹ so far there is no study which traces the emergence of metacultural uses of *wén* to refer to the particular notions of ‘conventionalized behavior’ conceptualized by members of the Zhōu elite to refer to their own traditions and moral values. In this dissertation I have tried to redress this situation by tracing the different stages in the historical transformation of the meanings of the word *wén* from ‘pattern’ to abstract metacultural concepts. First, in chapters 2-4, I showed that abstract metacultural uses of *wén* derived from the earlier more basic meaning ‘(decorative) pattern’ sometime in the late Chūnqiū or early Zhànguó period. Second, in chapter 5, I showed that metacultural *wén* only came to be translated as *culture* after metacultural uses to the Modern English term *culture* became part of common usage in the period from the mid-19th century to the present day.

The theory of lexicalized metaculture developed in chapter 1 provided the theoretical framework allowed me to use the lexicon as source in the historical study of the changes in the collectively shared framework for conceptualizing metaculture that took place as part of the many socio-political changes during the five centuries spanning the Chūnqiū and Zhànguó periods. Figure 15 (= figure 10 in chapter 1) illustrates how the lexicon is linked on one side to

⁴⁰⁹ See, for example, the studies on *wén* by Chow (1979), Gawlikowski (1987), Gawlikowski (1988), Falkenhausen (1996), and Kern (2001).

the historical contexts in which it emerged, and on the other to the historical contexts in which it is used.

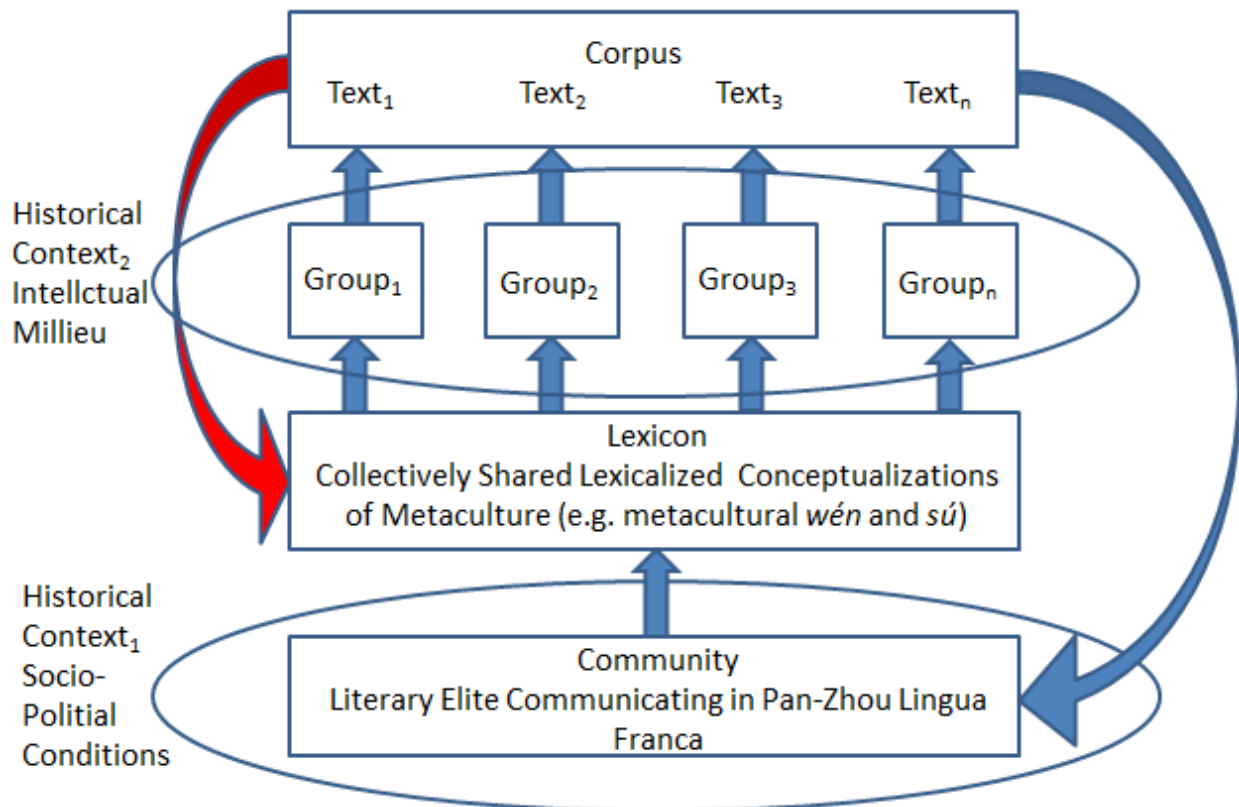


Figure 15. Lexicon as historical source. (=figure 10)

In chapter 2 I showed how the corpus of pre-Qín texts, indicated by the box at the top of the diagram in figure 15, can be used to study the lexicalization of metacultural *wén*. In pre-Zhànguó texts, e.g. in bronze inscription and in the *Shī*, *wén* refers to positive attributes of individuals of noble or royal birth, and means ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ rather than ‘accomplished,’ as proposed by Falkenhausen (1996). These meanings derive from the basic meaning ‘decorative pattern’ through regular diachronic processes of metaphorical extension and abstraction. Furthermore, I argue that possessing a beautiful and awe-inspiring appearance was not conceived

of as an acquired property. Wearing clothes embroidered with rank-indicating emblems (*wén*) and being equipped with lavishly decorated (*wén*) accoutrements signaling ‘dignity’ and ‘authority’ (*wēi*) was the prerogative of members of the royal family and high nobility, i.e., the *jūnzǐ*, in the aristocratic sense of ‘noblemen.’ One of this dissertation’s main proposals is that pre-Zhànguó uses of *wén* referred to having an ‘awe-inspiringly beautiful’ physical appearance, rather than to acquired moral traits. This analysis of *wén* helps us avoid the anachronistic interpretations of pre-Zhànguó occurrences of *wén* in moral or metacultural terms, which are often found in the traditional commentarial tradition, and it improves our understanding of the central role played by physical appearance in the construction of pre-Zhànguó social hierarchies.

It was not until Zhànguó period that *wén* came to be defined explicitly as an **acquired** ‘moral refinement’ that could be obtained even by people of lowly non-aristocratic background. It was also during this stage that adjectival *wén* in the sense ‘morally refined’ was first applied to dynasties (as in *Lúnyǔ* 3.14, discuss in chapter 2). Nominalized versions of this use of *wén* then gave rise to metacultural uses of *wén* referring to the ‘moral refinement’ of the Zhōu, e.g., the ideal ‘patterns of social mores and conventionalized practices established by the former kings’ referred to by the expression *sī wén* ‘this *wén* [= these patterns of conventionalized behavior]’ in *Lúnyǔ* 9.5. Through lexicalization this metacultural concept became one of the meanings of the term *wén* in the collectively shared lexicon (indicated by the second lowest box in figure 15) of the educated Zhōu elite.

Although members of the literate elite shared the same basic lexicon (otherwise they would not have been able to communicate), different attitudes toward metacultural *wén* are clearly present in the pre-Qín texts. As indicated in figure 15, different groups of thinkers and specialists of statecraft produce texts with different takes on metacultural *wén*. In chapter 3, I

discussed the attitudes toward metacultural *wén* in the *Hánfēizǐ*, the *Mòzǐ*, and the *Mèngzǐ*. In contrast to the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, which take metacultural *wén* to be a key concept in their moral philosophies, both the *Mòzǐ* and the *Hánfēizǐ* reject metacultural *wén* on philosophical grounds. In these two works, the material expression of *wén* in the form of costly embroidered garments (with emblems [*wén*] and insignia), decorated (*wén*) chariots, musical performances and lavish funeral ceremonies are all viewed as a waste of resources and a potentially subversive and corrupting influence.

Finally, perhaps the most important contribution of the framework of lexicalized metaculture is that it allows us to explain the surprising lack of discussion of metacultural *wén* in the *Mèngzǐ*. While the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* explicitly discuss metacultural *wén* as a key concept, the *Mèngzǐ* does not. Since both *Xúnzǐ* and *Mèngzǐ* are self-proclaimed followers of Kǒngzǐ, the *Mèngzǐ*'s silence on metacultural *wén* cries out for explanation. Slingerland's (2003b) analysis of the use of metaphors in these texts offers us the beginning of an explanation. Adopting externalist view of human nature, the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* conceptualize the edification process using crafts metaphors. In these texts, moral education is, metaphorically speaking, the process of 'polishing' and 'decorating' (*wén*) one's raw innate potential through 'polite studies' (*wénxué*). In contrast, the internalist view of human nature found in the *Mèngzǐ* conceptualizes the ideal edification process in terms of agriculture metaphors. Human nature is like a domesticated plant which has the innate potential to grow on its own, but which will only reach its full potential if tended to by a caring farmer.

In other words, the *Mèngzǐ* is not against 'culture' in the Modern English [Arnoldian] sense of the term. Like the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*, the *Mèngzǐ* endorses the practices and values of the Zhōu elite tradition. However, this does not mean that the *Mèngzǐ* has the same take on the

pre-Qín concept of metacultural *wén* and its role in the ideal edification process as the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ*. The *Lúnyǔ* and the *Xúnzǐ* view the process of edification as akin to the process of carving patterns (*wén*) onto raw pieces of jade. That is, the teacher and the sages carve and polish (*wén*) people until the ‘ideal patterns of behavior’ (i.e. metacultural *wén*) are imprinted on them. In the *Mèngzǐ*, the ideal models of behavior exemplified by the former kings and sages are also important. But they function more as guidelines for teachers rather than patterns (*wén*) which must be rigidly applied to human nature. Translating *wén* as ‘culture’ is thus problematic since it obscures the different takes on metacultural *wén* found in these three texts.

As shown in chapter 4, the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* in the Zhànguó period was triggered by the communicative needs of a community of ‘thinkers’ interested in producing theories of statecraft and moral philosophy. The lexicalization of metacultural *wén* should therefore be approached through a historical study of the socio-political conditions that contributed to the emergence of this community and their interest in metacultural concepts (= Historical Context₁ in figure 15), as well as of the intellectual milieu in which they formulated and circulated metacultural theories (= Historical Context₂ in figure 15). In other words, the lexicalization of metaculture (e.g., the coining of terms for the conceptualization of ‘conventionalized behaviors,’ such as the English word *culture* in the 18th and 19th centuries and the Old Chinese word *wén* in the second half of the first millennium BCE) should be approached as a historical problem.

It is obviously impossible to gain a complete understanding of the complex historical context which contributed to the lexicalization of metacultural *wén*. Nevertheless, I do suggest that the aspects of the historical context discussed in chapter 4 illustrate the explanatory potential of the framework of lexicalized metaculture and show how it enables us to formulate specific

hypotheses about the historical context which led to the crystallization of a collectively shared metacultural awareness of (a segment of) the literary Zhōu elite.

By enabling us to formulate specific hypotheses about possible links between historical changes in the larger socio-political context and the lexicalization of metacultural *wén*, the theoretical framework of lexicalized metaculture also provides an explanation for why the lexicalization of metacultural *wén* could not have occurred in the first half of the first millennium BCE that mitigates the problematic reliance on absence of evidence. Since the relevant socio-political contexts—in which salaried specialists of theories of statecraft and moral philosophy created and debated theories of ‘conventionalized behavior’—did not develop before the late Chūnqiū or early Zhànguó period, there simply was no need to coin a term for a concept which had yet to gain currency.

In chapter 5, I use the same theory of lexicalized metaculture (illustrated in figure 15) to show that the Modern English metacultural concepts of ‘culture,’ which developed over the course of the last three centuries, are idiosyncratic language-specific concepts which are not semantically equivalent to the metacultural concepts referred to by the term *wén* in pre-Qín texts. In this sense, ‘culture’ is something that is ‘discovered’ or ‘found in translation;’ that is, an artifact of the translation process rather than a concept that was actually present in pre-Qín texts.

In the case study presented in chapter 5, I traced the striking increase in the use of the word *culture* to render *wén* in English translations of the *Lúnyǔ* from 1691 to 2007. Over the last 200 years, the percentage of the twenty-nine instances of *wén* translated as *culture* has gone from zero to 28/29 or 96.5%. Overall, the expansion of the use of *culture* to translate *wén* can be shown to have piggy-backed on the proliferation of meanings of the term *culture* and on the concomitant increase in its frequency in the English language in general and as an analytical

category in the humanities and social sciences. Thus the increase in the use of the word *culture* to render *wén* should be explained as being triggered by lexical changes in the English language and in the theoretical terminology in the humanities, rather than ascribed solely to advances in our understanding of the Old Chinese texts themselves.

Using the term *culture* to analyze collective metacultural consciousness in the pre-Qín period is just as problematic as using the Old Chinese term *wén* to discuss contemporary American ‘culture.’ In spite of this, largely unqualified use of the term *culture* is still widespread in recent studies of ‘cultural identity’ in early China. Given the fact that the field of China studies has been heavily influenced by the ‘culturalist paradigm’ introduced by Fairbank, Levenson and Parsons—which continues to exert influence despite being thoroughly criticized—scholars working on “Chinese culture” and “identity” must be particularly careful when using the term *culture* as an analytical category. By highlighting the challenges present when translating *wén*, the framework of lexicalized metaculture can help us avoid or mitigate some of the worst hermeneutic pitfalls.

As argued in chapter 1, just as Molière’s Jourdain “used prose without knowing that it was prose”, us many of us (scholars and non-scholars alike, both today and in pre-modern societies) may produce metacultural discourse (e.g., *The Hua and the Rong cook and enjoy food differently*, and *French and German culinary cultures are different*) without knowing that we are engaging in metacultural activity. And many of us may use language-specific crystallizations of the collectively shared conceptualizations of metaculture (e.g., terms such as *culture*, *customs*, *wén*, *sú*, etc.) without realizing that these metacultural terms and the concepts behind them are parochial constructions that were lexicalized and used in specific socio-political contexts. The value of the theory of lexicalized metaculture proposed here thus lies in naming otherwise

overlooked phenomena (i.e., the lexicalization and use of metacultural terms) and providing a framework for studying them in their language-specific manifestations in both modern and pre-modern societies.

Recently there has been a great deal of interest in the study of identity in early China. The theory of lexicalized metaculture outlined here has the potential to contribute significantly to the study of the emergence of a collectively shared metacultural awareness in pre-Qín China and its implications for the reformulation of Zhōu and non-Zhōu identities in metacultural terms that took place at the same time. In Bergeton (2006) I argued that the conceptualization of non-Zhōu identity underwent a change at the end of the Chūnqiū and the beginning of the Zhànguó period. In pre-Zhànguó texts the non-Zhōu others are mainly conceived of as ‘belligerent others.’ That is, non-Zhōu groups are mentioned as actual or potential enemies on the battlefield. In contrast, in Zhànguó period texts, non-Zhōu groups are often lumped together as ‘cultural others.’ At around the beginning of the Zhànguó period the term *yí* 夷 emerges as the default expression to refer to this new concept of non-Zhōu others who adhere to non-Zhōu conventionalized practices. Unlike the Zhōu they are not described as abiding by ritual practices and decorum (*lǐ* 禮). Likewise they are never described as being *wén* or engaging in *wén* practices (unless they consciously imitate Zhōu ways). Instead their practices are referred to as ‘customs’ (*sú*). As far as we can tell, like *wén*, the term *sú* also does not begin to be used to refer to metacultural concepts before the Zhànguó period.

The study of *wén* presented in this dissertation is thus part of a larger book project, on which I am currently working, which aims to account for the simultaneous changes in ethnonyms (i.e. the emergence of the term *yí* to refer to ‘cultural others’) and metacultural vocabulary (i.e.,

the emergence of metacultural uses of *wén* and *sí*) that took place at the beginning of the Zhànguó period.

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