

Rhetoric in East Asia: China and Japan

RUDONG CHEN

Peking University

Chinese rhetorical thought can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE). The word for “rhetoric” in Chinese came from Confucius’ (551–479 BCE) speech in *The book of changes*: “The gentleman advances in virtue, and cultivates all the spheres of his duty. His honesty and good faith are the way in which he advances in virtue. His sincere rhetoric (*Xū Cí*) is the way in which he fulfills his spheres of duty.” In ancient Chinese, “rhetoric” means to decorate oral and written words, to use language appropriately and effectively.

DEVELOPMENT OF RHETORIC IN CHINA

In ancient China, people summed up the functions of rhetoric in four aspects: moral cultivation, life pursuit, interpersonal coordination, and social management. Rhetoric or speech was regarded as one of the abilities and qualities of participating in social management as well as one’s pursuit of life, as expressed in Shusun Bao’s speech in Xianggong’s year 24 of *The Tso Chuen*: “The highest meaning of ‘not decaying’ is when there is established virtue; the second, when there is established merit; and the third, when there is established speech. They are not forgotten with length of time: this is called three ways of ‘not decaying.’” Rhetoric was also regarded as one important means of social management. *The book of songs* said, “If the wording of your decrees is gentle and kind, the people will be of one heart and support you; if the wording of your decrees is pleasing and convincing, the people will feel safe and assured.” Ancient Chinese people thought that rhetoric should obey four moral principles: “speak rituals,” “speak humanity,” “speak loyalty,” and “speak truthfulness.” They also summarized some rhetorical principles such as the harmony of rhetoric and context, the harmony of “Wén” (refinement) and “Zhì” (simplicity), and the harmony of “Dá” (clear) and “Qiǎo” (literary grace).

Chén Kuí’s *Wén Zé* in the Song dynasty is usually regarded as the first systematic rhetoric book of China. Actually, there were many books about rhetoric before the Song dynasty, such as *The book of changes*, *The analects of Confucius*, *Lǎo Zi*, *Hánfēi Zi*, *Guǐgúzi*, Liú Xiàng’s *Shuōyuàn*, Cáo Pǐ’s *Diǎnlùn*, Lù Jǐ’s *Wén Fù*, and Líu Xié’s *Wénxīn Diāolóng*. Chén Kuí’s *Wén Zé* is a composition book. It put forward some principles of writing, and summed up many rhetorical means, figures of speech and styles (→ Style and Rhetoric).

The International Encyclopedia of Communication, First Edition. Edited by Wolfgang Donsbach.

© 2008 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2008 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecr043

Modern Chinese rhetoric was established from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1930s under the influence of western and Japanese rhetoric. The representative books of this period include Lóng Bóchún's *Rhetoric: Introduction to letters*, Tāng Zhèncháng's *Textbook of rhetoric*, Wáng Yì's *Rhetoric*, Táng Yuè's *Figures of speech*, and Chén Wàngdào's *Introduction to rhetoric*. They investigated the objects, scope, and tasks of rhetoric. These studies focused on usage of words and sentences, figures of speech, and style. Until the 1950s, Chinese rhetoric developed independently from modern linguistics. Many new books emerged, such as Lǚ Shūxiāng and Zhū Déxī's *Lectures on grammar and rhetoric*, Zhāng Gōng's *Modern Chinese rhetoric*, Zhāng Zhìgōng's *The outline of rhetoric*, and Ní Bǎoyuán's *Rhetoric*. These studies mainly focused on rhetorical means such as sounds, vocabulary, and grammar, as well as figures of speech, paragraphs, chapters, and style. From the 1980s, the research objects, scope, fields, and tasks of rhetoric changed greatly. Many new books have been published, such as Wáng Déchūn and Chén Chén's *Modern rhetoric*, Zhèng Yuǎnhàn's *Speech stylistics*, Lí Yùnhàn's *Stylistics of Chinese language*, Wáng Xījié's *General rhetoric*, Líu Huànhuī's *Compendium of rhetoric*, Zhāng Liànqiáng's *Studies on the theoretical basis of rhetoric*, and Chén Rùdōng's *Introduction to socio-psychological rhetoric*, *Cognitive rhetoric*, and *Contemporary rhetoric of Chinese*. In addition, studies on the history of rhetoric phenomena and rhetoric discipline have made great achievements, such as Zhèng Zīyú's *Rhetoric history of China*, Zhōu Zhènǚ's *Rhetoric history of China*, *General history of Chinese rhetoric*, chief-edited by Zhèng Zīyú and Zōng Tíngǔ, and *Rhetoric phenomena history of China*.

Modern Chinese rhetoric has made great progress. First, understanding of the nature of rhetoric has deepened. The meaning of “rhetoric” has changed gradually from “polishing” and “decorating” to “a purposive, effective and contextual speech communicative act or symbolic act” (→ Rhetoric, Argument, and Persuasion; Rhetorical Studies). Second, the objects and scope of Chinese rhetoric have been extended from rhetorical skills to context, schema of rhetorical communication, laws of rhetorical communication, and discourse comprehension (→ Discourse; Discourse Comprehension). Third, new research methods have been used, such as socio-psychological and cognitive approaches (→ Cognition; Information Processing; Persuasion). Fourth, new rhetorical laws and principles have been revealed, such as “rhetoric fits context, speech purposes, and socio-psychological elements.” In a word, Chinese rhetoric has made great achievements from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day.

RHETORIC IN JAPAN

Rhetoric in East Asia also includes Japanese and Korean rhetoric (→ Rhetoric in East Asia: Korea). Some people believe that *Wénjīng Mifú* was the origin of Japanese rhetoric, but others consider that Japanese rhetoric began from the Meiji era. Meiji rhetoric included five different forms: “rhetoric,” “article studies,” “Bijigaku” (a free translation of “rhetoric” in Japanese), “Bunshougaku” (eloquence), and “Shujigaku” (the pronunciation of “rhetoric” in Japanese). Modern Japanese rhetoric focuses on methods of

writing or composition, especially methods of writing poems (→ Rhetoric and Poetics). Its main content is connotation, structure, form, style of articles, figure of speech, and rhetorical means. The rhetorical studies in Meiji and Taisho can be divided into four types. The first is studies of “Bijigaku,” such as Sanae Pakada’s *Bijigaku*, Shoyo Tsubouchi’s *Bijigaku*, and Hougetu Shimamura’s *New Bijigaku*. The second is “rhetoric” studies, such as Shoyo Tsubouchi’s *Rhetoric*, Chikarashu Igarashi’s *General rhetoric: Composition and application*, Tateki Owada’s *Rhetoric*, Hagoromo Takeshima’s *Rhetoric*, Seichi Sasaki’s *Rhetorical methods*, Motohiko Hattori’s *Rhetoric*, and Yoshiharu Watanabe’s *Outline of modern rhetoric*. The third is article or composition studies, such as Chikarashu Igarashi’s *New talks on articles* and Totsudo Kato’s *Applied rhetoric: Speech and article*. The last one is eloquence or persuasion studies, such as Dai Kuroiwa’s *Eloquent rhetoric* and Ryutaro Nagai’s *Lectures on elocution*. Modern Japanese rhetoric was influenced by western rhetoric theories from its beginning. Some other western rhetoric books also had a strong influence on Japanese rhetoric, such as Campbell’s *Philosophy of rhetoric*, Blair’s *Lectures on rhetoric*, and Whately’s *Elements of rhetoric*. In addition, modern Japanese rhetoricians absorbed perspectives from ancient rhetorical thought such as Cáo Pǐ’s *Diǎnlùn*, Líu xié’s *Wénxīn Diǎolóng*, and Chén Kuí’s *Wén Zé*.

Japanese rhetoric has developed continuously since the 1930s. Its research fields expanded from forms, structures of articles, writing methods, figure of speech, and style to the cognitive, epistemic, and psychological basis of rhetoric, metaphor, etc., such as Shigehiko Toyama’s *Japanese rhetoric*, Akira Nakamura’s *Japanese rhetoric*, Ken’ichi Seto’s *Epistemic rhetoric*, Tateki Sugeno’s *New rhetoric*, and Kanji Hatano’s *Modern rhetoric* (→ Rhetoric and Epistemology; Rhetorics: New Rhetorics) In addition, studies on the history of Japanese rhetoric made progress, such as Hiroshi Hayami’s *Neoteric Japanese rhetoric* and *The history of Rhetoric: Neoteric Japan*, Shiro Hara’s *Studies on the history of Japanese rhetoric*, and Shuntaro Arisawa’s *Studies on the evolvement process of Japanese rhetoric in the early and mid Meiji eras*.

Modern Japanese rhetoric flourished in the period from the 1860s to the 1920s while western rhetoric declined. It was more than half a century earlier than the renaissance of western rhetoric. Political reforms in the Meiji era provided a social basis for the rise of modern Japanese rhetoric.

SEE ALSO: → Cognition → Communication Modes, Asian → Discourse → Discourse Comprehension → Information Processing → Persuasion → Rhetoric, Argument, and Persuasion → Rhetoric in East Asia: Korea → Rhetoric and Epistemology → Rhetoric and Poetics → Rhetorical Studies → Rhetorics: New Rhetorics → Style and Rhetoric

References and Suggested Readings

Chen, Ru-dong (2001). Zhongguo Xiucixue: 20 Shijin Huigu Yu 21 Shiji Zhanwang [Chinese rhetoric: Review of the twentieth century and prospect for the twenty-first]. *Pingdingshan Shizhuan Xuebao* Journal of Pingdingshan Teachers College], no. 3.

- Chen, Ru-dong (2005). Xianqin Shiqi de Hanyu Xiucixue Sixiang: Lilun Yu Shijian [Chinese rhetorical thought before the Qin dynasty: Theory and practice]. *Susahak*, no. 3.
- Tomasi, M. (2004). *Rhetoric in modern Japan: Western influences on the development of narrative and oratorical style*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.