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Knowing and doing emotions in times of crisis and radical change

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Knowing and doing emotions in times of crisis and radical change

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Introduction

During the second half of the Ming period 明 (1368-1644), the northern tribes of the Jurchens formed a strong federation and moved south. Eventually, under the name of Manchus 滿洲 they conquered China and became the founders of 清 (1644-1911). During the long Ming-Qing-transition period, which lasted from the 1620s through the 1680s, there was hardly anyone in the Chinese empire who was not threatened by marauding soldiers, bandits and military desertions.¹ Moreover, people were afflicted by famines that became common in northern China due to unusually dry and cold weather. Natural disasters, such as flooding, and the declining governmental management of irrigation and flood-control projects in the southern regions not only caused famine, but also tax increases.

Gradual change however, began as early as 1400, when the relatively stable structure of imperial power, local elites and village peasants started to disperse. Due to an extraordinary rise of several merchant clans who gained power at the expense of the state, the social categories of “official-literati”, “peasants” and “artisans” gradually became anachronistic. In about 1600, the hereditary classifications no longer matched the actual local status classifications.² Furthermore, the gradual increase in population from about 60 million in the 14th century to about 200 million in 1600³ stimulated these processes of transformation. Both led to the imperial loss of control over the country and its “working resources”.

At the same time, a newly growing literacy that had been developing since the 16th century led to ever-increasing writing activities by all those examination candidates who could not get any post as an official. They wrote handbooks for everyday usage, through which practical knowledge found increasing entry into the libraries of numerous households whose members could read and write.⁴ In this context, in particular in the Jiangnan macro-region⁵, more and more women were able to read and to write and even to publish their writings within their

¹ Lynn A. STRUVE, *The Ming-Qing Conflict, 1619-1683: A Historiography and Source Guide*. [Monograph and Occasional Paper Series, No. 56] Michigan, Association for Chinese Studies, 1998.

² Timothy BROOK, *The Confusions of Pleasure. Commerce and Culture in Ming China*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999, p. 88-114.

³ William SKINNER (ed.), *The City in Late Imperial China*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1977, p. 19-20.

⁴ On the popularization of knowledge in the later imperial period, see David G. JOHNSON, *Popular Culture in late imperial China*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985; Evelyn RAWSKI, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China*, University of Michigan Press, 1979, p. 3-17, Susan NAQUIN and Evelyn RAWSKI, *Chinese Society in the eighteenth century*, Newhaven, Yale University Press, 1987, p. 3-11 and p. 58-59; Benjamin A. ELMAN and Alexander WOODSIDE (eds.), *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994; Thomas H.C. LEE, *Education in traditional China: a history*, (*Handbuch der Orientalistik*, Vierte Abteilung, China) Leiden, Boston, Köln, Brill, 2000, p. 432-450.

⁵ This geographic area refers to the area south of the Yangtze River, including the southern part of the Yangtze Delta.

lifetime.⁶ A booming publishing industry fostered cross-fertilization between the ideas of men and women and the exploration of new philosophical and literary possibilities. Emotionality/sensitivity in family relationships became increasingly relevant in this world in flux,⁷ a development that was also connected to altered gender roles.⁸

This paper deals with both, the particular shift towards sensitivity, on one hand, and specific modes of suffering which were predominant during the long decades of “the most dramatic dynastic transition in Chinese history”,⁹ on the other.

Concerned with the question of how we can best approach and access emotion-knowledge and emotion-practices in historical contexts of late Imperial China, e.g. from about the 14th century onwards, this paper decidedly avoids the paths taken in former attempts. They had either focused on philosophical canonical texts,¹⁰ or explored the imagery of language related to emotions in literary texts.¹¹ To be sure, these attempts are important contributions to the history of emotions in China, as they were pioneering this research. Yet, directing the main focus on particular terms and concepts they had determined beforehand – such as “love”, “passion”, “guilt” and “shame” for instance –, misled them to neglecting the socio-historical contexts, and consequently ignoring the lives of almost 90 percent of the people in the Chinese past.

Only recently, literary historians have started to ask to what extent views of desire in late imperial China played a role in the development of traditional Chinese fiction as a narrative genre.¹² Furthermore, historians started collecting systematically the occurrences of a variety of emotion-related terms in late imperial literary texts, and presenting them in bulky compendia containing elaborated glossaries.¹³ Their contributions reveal insights into the ways attitudes towards emotions played a role for the emerging new ways of life in the 16th and 17th centuries.¹⁴

⁶ Dorothy KO, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers. Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994, p. 29-31.

⁷ Dorothy KO, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers. Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994, p. 30.

⁸ Maram EPSTEIN, *Competing Discourses. Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction*, Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 13-60; Dorothy KO, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers. Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994, p. 115-145; Susan MANN, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 3-15.

⁹ Frederic WAKEMAN, “Romantics, Stoics, and Martyrs in Seventeenth-Century China”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 43, 4, 1984, p. 631-665, here: p. 631.

¹⁰ Such as for instance Erica BRINDLEY, “Music, Cosmos, and the Development of Psychology in Early China”, *T'oung Pao* 92, 2006, p. 1-49; Angus C. GRAHAM, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990, p. 59-64.

¹¹ Such as Paolo SANTANGELO, *Emozioni e desideri in Cina. La riflessione neoconfuciana dalla metà del XIV alla metà del XIX secolo*. Bari, Gius: Laterza & figli, 1992.

¹² See Martin W. HUANG, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 3.

¹³ Paolo SANTANGELO, *Sentimental Education in Chinese History. An Interdisciplinary Textual Research on Ming and Qing Sources*. Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2003.

¹⁴ Wai-kam HO, *Late Ming Literati: Social and Cultural Ambience*, in Chu-tsing LI and James C.Y. WATT (éd.), *The Chinese Scholar's Studio: Artistic Life in the Late Ming Period*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 23-36.

However, when it comes to the complexity of “emotion-knowledge” and of “doing emotions”¹⁵ in the Chinese past, we realize that there is not much said about it. The term emotion-knowledge refers to people’s ideas and perspectives on emotions within a particular time and place coherence. The Western modern self’s emotion-knowledge for instance is constituted by a sense of interiority. As Charles Taylor puts it: “We think of our thoughts, ideas, or feelings as being “within” us, while the objects in the world which these mental states bear on are “without”.”¹⁶ It is important to keep in mind that this way of “knowing about emotions” (emotion-knowledge) is far from being a universal and timeless kind of knowledge.

Ancient Chinese texts for instance suggest that emotions have been perceived in terms of “the basic facts of a matter”, as “underlying and basic dynamic factors”, as “basic popular sentiments/responses”, as “general basic instincts/propensities”, as ‘essential sensibilities and sentiments, viewed as commendable”,¹⁷ as “basic bodily processes within the inner organs”¹⁸, as “basic motivation/attitude”, as “personal deep convictions, responses, feelings” or as “settings of cardiac faculties/senses”¹⁹, they were seen both as parts of “outer” atmospheric space as much as of the inner world. As we will see in this paper, these diverse views on emotions were later elaborated towards morality in the light of 11th and 12th century Neo-Confucian conceptualization. Emotion-knowledge in the 16th and 17th centuries again appears as highly diverse and – at least in medical texts – as grounded in corporeally informed states and processes.

Doing emotions refers in this paper to many things that go beyond verbal language expressions: such as gestures, bodily movements and bodily processes, ritual practices as well as everyday social interactions. Gestures as much as bodily movements and bodily processes appeared and disappeared on the historical stage just like did human beings themselves. Among these things, only those captured in texts or visual images can be directly accessed by historians today. However, bodily processes and bodily movements, crucial elements of communication acts that provoked emotions, just as much as they were also constituted by them, need to be explored in their inarticulateness and ambiguities.²⁰ This paper exemplifies such an exploration of emotion-practices in the 17th century.

This contribution is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the formative period for the particular neo-Confucian emotion-knowledge. The second and third parts are both concerned with emotion-knowledge and emotion-practices in the 16th and 17th centuries.

¹⁵ On this definition of emotion practices see the inspiring article by Monique SCHEER “Are Emotions a kind of practice (and is that what makes them have a history)? A Bourdieuan approach to understanding emotion”, *History and Theory*, t. 51, May 2012, p. 191-220.

¹⁶ See Charles TAYLOR, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*; Cambridge, M.A. Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 111.

¹⁷ See Halvor EIFRING, *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature*; Leiden and Boston: Brill; chap. I, “Introduction. Emotions and the Conceptual History of *Qing* 情”, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2004, p. 1-36.

¹⁸, *Emotions, Body, and Bodily Sensations within an Early Field of Expertise Knowledge in China*, in Paolo SANTANGELO in cooperation with Ulrike MIDDENDORF (éd.), *From Skin to Heart. Perceptions of Emotions and Bodily Sensations in Traditional Chinese Culture*. (= LunWen - Studien zur Geistesgeschichte und Literatur in China 11), Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, p. 41-63.

¹⁹ For this interpretation see Robert H. GASSMANN, “Hearts, desires and behavioural patterns: Debating human nature in ancient China.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Volume 74, Issue 02, June 2011, pp. 237-273.

²⁰ Outstanding in this regard are the investigations by Judith T. ZAITLIN, *The Phantom Heroine. Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Literature*. Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 2007. She explores the literary discourses on the interrelationship between love and death, sexuality and fertility.

Neo-Confucian views on emotions

The Song dynasty (960-1280) developed new educational ideals that became obligatory for the following centuries (1400-1900). In the 11th century, the *Daoxue* 道学 (Learning of the Way)- movement that later was called *SongMing lixue* 宋明理学 (Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming-times) sought to creatively revitalize the somewhat stagnant Confucian tradition by reinterpreting the ancient Confucian traditions.²¹

Scholars now, i.e. in the 11th century, were concerned with taking the Confucian classics seriously. By stressing moral education in terms of the Learning of the “Way” they dealt with the philosophical accounts of self-cultivation (*xiu shen* 修身). Due to these new concerns, Neo-Confucian scholars also reshaped the classical Canon. Four texts, commonly referred to as “Four Books” (*Sishu* 四書) became the new core of the Confucian canon. The “Four Books” were: the *Daxue* 大學 (Great Learning), the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean), the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects) and the *Mengzi* 孟子 (Menzius). They became the basic curricula to be studied for the imperial civil examinations beginning in 1313 through the early 20th century. Through this examination system the candidates for the state bureaucracy were selected.²² Studying and memorizing the canonical classics meant simultaneously incorporating moral self-cultivation with its highest goal, namely to become a great man (*da ren* 大人) or a sage (*sheng ren* 聖人)²³ in terms of *ren* 仁 (humaneness, benevolence, compassion). Learning and exercising these virtues was specifically connected to controlling and managing emotional life.

Self-cultivation in Neo-Confucian terms meant to practice the “virtues righteous” (*yi* 義), humaneness (*ren* 仁) as well as benevolence (*wei ren* 為仁). This first and foremost meant that one had to overcome one’s selfish desires (*ke ji* 克己) and to return to the observance of the rites (*li* 禮). Thus, one could attain the perfect virtue of the original mind (*ben xin* 本心), which then could be equated with the heavenly principle (*tian li* 天理). These explanations on the matter by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) were regarded as the orthodox knowledge to be studied and practiced for the Imperial examinations.²⁴ The conceptual bifurcation of the heart/mind (*xin* 心) into a moral (*dao xin* 道心) and a human mind (*ren xin* 人心) was fundamental to the vision of human nature (*xing* 性), in which humaneness as the chief Confucian virtue could only be achieved by overcoming and controlling all selfish desires and motives.

Therefore, no contrast between affective states and cognitive states, no conflict between emotion and reason bothered these thinkers. They were more concerned with a dichotomy between human nature and emotions. Thus, the human being is seen as undividable from its emotions: human nature is undividable from its emotions, like the waves are inherent to water. Human nature was compared to water, and the waves to the emotions. If the waves become

²¹ This movement came to be called Neo-Confucianism in the 20th century. See Peter BOL, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Asia Center, 2008.

²² See Benjamin ELMAN, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*, President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2013, p. 13ff.

²³ On the distinction between these two terms see Kai-wing CHOW, “Purist Hermeneutics and Ritualist Ethics in Mid-Ch’ing Thought”, in Richard J. SMITH and Danny Wynn Ye KWOK (éd.), *Cosmology, Ontology, and Human Efficacy: Essays in Chinese Thought*. Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 1993, p. 179-204, here p. 212.

²⁴ See Benjamin A. ELMAN and Alexander WOODSIDE (eds.), *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994, p. 63.

too turbulent, then the calm sea could transform into a dangerous mountain torrent.²⁵ One should do everything to be in tune with one's own moral heart (which is correlated to the moral principle (*li*)). The division of the heart into two parts (the human mind (*ren xin*) and the moral virtue-mind (*dao xin*)) is conceptually based on the distinction of matter (*qi* 氣)²⁶ and the (heavenly and moral) principle (*li* 理). In other words, the human being, which is basically good and undividable from its emotions, must nevertheless be on guard against selfish desires (that are correlated to the human mind and *Qi*). This distinction mirrors two conceptual ways of being: the metaphysical sphere (*xing er shang* 形而上) and the physical/experiential sphere (*xing er xia* 形而下). The former included the cosmic force heaven (*tian* 天), nature (*xing* 性), the principle (*li* 理) and tranquility (*jing* 靜). The latter included the phenomena activity/movement (*dong* 動) and *Qi* 氣 (the basic stuff, everything consisted of). The antagonism between the metaphysical and the physical/experiential sphere in dualistic terms implied that the ill could arise (only) from the physical/experiential realm.²⁷ Thus, the bifurcation of the mind (*xin*) demanded that one should eliminate desire and aspiration since these phenomena were generally considered as selfish. In what follows, we shall see how 16th and 17th centuries writings deal with this kind of emotion-knowledge.

Doing emotions in the early 17th century - Transgressing issues

“余少負情癡，遇朋儕必傾赤相與，吉凶同患。聞人有奇窮奇枉，雖不相識，求為之地，或力所不及，則嗟歎累日，中夜展轉不寐。見一有情人，輒欲下拜。或無情者，志言相忤，必委曲以情導之，萬萬不從乃已。”²⁸

“Ever since I was a young man, I have been endowed with an obsessive sensitivity of feeling. When I meet friends, I devote to them my utmost sincerity, being at their side in good times as in bad ones. When I know of someone who is in great distress or suffers extreme injustice, I try my best to help him, even if we are unacquainted. And if my efforts are not enough to relieve him of his predicament, I sigh for days, tossing and turning in my bed in sleepless nights. Whenever I find a person rich with emotion, I immediately want to bow before him. Whereas with someone who lacks emotion, and whose intent and language are the opposite of mine, I always feel the need to try to teach him indirectly with my feelings, desisting only when it gets clear that he has no desire to accept them.”²⁹

The text quoted above is a passionate plea for the cultivation of an emotional culture that appreciates sensitivity and compassion, but also passion and desire, which in the aforementioned Neo-Confucian views were to be abandoned from everyday life-practices.

²⁵ Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱自语类, vol. 1, *juan* 5, ed. Li Jingde 黎靖德. Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1989, p. 97.

²⁶ There is no appropriate single translation for *qi* in Western languages. The terms “energy” and “life force” can be regarded as most approximate within medical contexts. In the case shown here, “matter” seems the most appropriate in its opposed position to principle (*li*). Yet, without clarification of the very semantics of these terms in the Western contexts, they also appear as vague and ambiguous. On the many different possibilities to translate *Qi* into Western languages see Manfred KUBNY, *Qi-Lebenskraftkonzepte in China. Definitionen, Theorien und Grundlagen*. Heidelberg, Haug-Verlag, 1995, p. 67-79.

²⁷ See Martin W. HUANG, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 27.

²⁸ See FENG Menglong 馮夢龍, *Qingshi xu* (Preface to “Qingshi”) [History of Love]. In Feng Menglong quanji 馮夢龍全集, Shanghai 1993, vols. 37-38, 1a-b.

²⁹ My translation.

These lines stem from the *History of Love/Emotions (Qingshi 情史)*.³⁰ The author of this passage, Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646), was one of the so-called town-hermits (*shiyin* 市隱), hidden people (*yinren* 隱人) or extraordinary people (*yiren* 異人, *qiren* 奇人), who from late 16th through early 17th century lived in the cultural centers in Southeast China (Jiangnan Macroregion). They nurtured aloofness and eccentricity as a trademark of their autonomy. It was a flourishing commerce in the Southeast of China, a growing literacy since the 16th century and the ever increasing numbers of candidates at the traditional examination routine that fostered a surplus of licentiates (*shengyuan* 生員), who had passed the college exam and enjoyed social privileges such as access to local government facilities and limited immunity against corporal punishments. Yet, this surplus of licentiates, especially in the South, never got an official position. Thus, they needed to earn their living in alternative ways to that of being an official. Besides writing plays and novels, they compiled handbooks for everyday usage, including medical textbooks for an ever-growing readership.

Feng Menglong was among these male scholars who did not make a real career. He never gained the top distinction in official examination, and only at the age of sixty he was appointed as a magistrate. His celebration of the emotions in the sense of spontaneous feelings and passion, inspired the emerging of the so called “cult/teaching of love/teaching through feelings” (*qingjiao* 情教) in the 16th century. This teaching has been interpreted in terms of a romanticism that gave rise to subjective and individualistic feelings, to the preference of friendship over family bonds, to a celebration of the concept of companionate marriages that were preceded by practices of scholar-beauty love affairs and by romantic soul-mate (*zhiji* 知己) relations.³¹

According to Feng Menglong, *qing* (emotion, love, passion) is the essential condition of life, in the sense of being “the string which [binds] all scattered things [lit. coins] together [on the earth].”³² This definition holds a major claim, namely to transform the conventional understanding of emotions and passion. Some Neo-Confucian perceptions of emotions (*qing*) were heavily influenced by the antagonism of the two aforementioned ways of being, the physical/experiential sphere (*xing er xia*) and the metaphysical sphere (*xing er shang*). As introduced above, the latter included the cosmic force Heaven (*tian*), nature (*xing*), the principle (*li*) and tranquility (*jing*), whereas the phenomena activity/movement (*dong*) and *qi* (the basic stuff of life) belonged to the physical/experiential sphere.

In the quoted passage, Feng points to concrete bodily gestures, movements and acts: sighing for days, tossing and turning in the bed during sleepless nights; bowing before a person who is rich of emotions. These moments of indirect / implicit teaching by showing one’s own emotions (expressions) is moreover evidenced by the author’s verbal statement that he decidedly does not rely on words, but only trusts in the powers of (bodily) gestures and bodily expressed behaviour in terms of persuasion and education. Teaching through feelings (*qingjiao*) is the core term here, which seems to be instantaneously bound to the concrete materiality of emotional processes. With this, Feng refers to the notion of implicit knowledge,

³⁰ The title is also translated as “Anatomy of love”. See for instance Paolo SANTANGELO, “Emotions in Late Imperial China: Evolution and Continuity in Ming-Qing Perception of Passions”, in Vivienne ALLETON et Alexei VOLKOV (éd.). *Notions et perceptions du changement en Chine. Textes présentés au IX Congrès de l’Association Européenne d’études chinoises*, Paris, Collège de France, 1994, p. 166-186. See also Barbara BISELTO, “Fragments of *Qing* 情: the *Qingshi leilüe* 情史類略 and the Literary Categorization of Love’ in 17th century China”, in Giusi TAMBURELLO (ed), *Concepts and Categories of Emotion in East Asia*, Roma, Carocci editore, 2012, p. 148-159 ; Barbara BISELTO, “The composition of the *Qingshi* (The History of love) in late Ming book culture”, in *Aspects of emotion in Late Imperial China, Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques* LXVI-4, 2012, p. 915-942.

³¹ See Maram EPSTEIN, *op. cit.*, 2001, p. 91.

³² See FENG Menglong 1993, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

e.g. the ways we know without explicitly naming what we know but on which the learning processes and procedures of emotion behaviour /doing emotions rely for their major part. Therefore, Feng here refrains from stressing the speech acts, instead he refers to concretely “practiced” emotions in the sense of “doing emotions”. Moreover, the expressive ways he feels and does emotions can be seen as part of the widening gap between norms and social realities in the urban sphere of the late 16th and early 17th century.

The *Qingshi* (History of love) quoted above has been described as a “reflection on the phenomenon of love and as the widest-ranging attempt in traditional China to trace back the origins of the reproductive drive, and then to sweep over its cultural forms, including the purely hedonistic ones, and its various supernatural re-elaborations.”³³ In addition to this reflectional approach, Feng was concerned with the educational effect of his collection that should “let people know the abiding power of feelings (使人知情之可久) and thereby turning insensitivity into sensitivity” [lit.: turning people from a state of being without feeling into the state of having feelings] and “turning private feelings into public concern (私情化公).”³⁴

Now, all these notions bear a number of transgressive elements with regard to the normative Neo-Confucian views on emotions, which were to be remembered by heart by every pupils and every examination candidate since the early 14th century: at best, emotions should not be manifested, and in the case they are manifested (some translate “aroused”), they should be “done” according to the social measures and roles. However we should ask: what did the new, late 16th century concern for the transformational power of the emotions mean in practice? How did a sensitive person act in practice, how did he/she “do emotions” in times of distress, threat and danger?

Doing emotions in the early 17th century - Part II

In the story “Shen Xiu Causes Seven Deaths with One Bird” (沈小官鳥害七命), published in 1620, Feng Menglong (the same author we quoted at length above) describes a woman who collapses onto the floor after she was told that her child had just died. In order to consider her deep desperation and pain the narrator reminds the reader to look at her five viscera. As a result the reader will get an idea about her feelings. The denomination of emotions here apparently is not *qing* 情 or *qingzhi* 情志 but the five viscera (*wu zang* 五臟): “If you don’t know the state of her five viscera, first see how [she lies there] unable to lift her four limbs.” (不知五臟如何，先見四肢不舉).³⁵

Focusing on the woman’s feeling and suffering, Feng leads the readers’ attention to her five viscera and her four limbs. Evidently, these corporeal orbs, the viscera, were supposed to reveal an idea about her painful suffering. The notions of “five viscera” (*wu zang*) and “four limbs” (*si zhi*) are thus more than a mere storyteller’s rhetoric.

The ‘five viscera’ (*wu zang*) was a collective term for the heart, lung, spleen, liver and the kidneys.³⁶ The five viscera are moreover connected to the ‘five phases’ (*wu xing* 五行) paradigm which correlates the heart to fire, the lung to metal, the spleen to the earth, the liver

³³ See Paolo SANTANGELO, “Passioni D’Oriente: Eros ed Emozioni nelle Civiltà Asiatiche. Sezione Asia Orientale. Atti del convegno *La Sapienza*”, 29-31 Maggio 2003, A Cura di Paolo Santangelo. Supplemento No. 4 Alla Rivista degli Studi Orientali Nuova Serie LXXVIII. Pisa and Roma, Accademia Editoriale, 2007, p. 123.

³⁴ See FENG, 1993, *op. cit.*, *Qingshu xu*, *op. cit.*, 1a-b, 2b-3a. For translation see Hua-yuan LI MOWRY, Chinese Love Stories from “Ch’ing-shih”, Hamden, Connecticut, Archon Book, 1983, p. 12.

³⁵ The story “Shen Xiu Causes Seven Deaths with One Bird” (“Shen xiaoguan niao hai qi ming” 沈小官鳥害七命), is item no. 26 in the collection *Stories Old and New (Gujin xiaoshuo 古今小說)*; FENG, 1958, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 394.

³⁶ In this text I use the terms “*wu zang*”, “*five zang*”, “*yin-viscera*” and “*five organs*” interchangeably. For a detailed study of the five *zang* in an early 17th century medical textbook, see HSU Elisabeth, 2000: 165-187.

to wood, and the kidneys to water. As a technical term, *wu zang* denoted the physiological functions of generating and storing vital energy (*qi* 氣), the basic stuff, of which everything in this world (including human beings) consists.³⁷ *Qi* and *jing* (the essences) within the five viscera give rise to five different emotions (*qingzhi* 情志), i.e., *xi* 喜 (happiness), *si* 思 (thought, worry), *bei* 悲 (sadness), *kong* 恐 (fear) and *nu* 怒 (anger). Moreover, they are related to the five *shen* 神 (spirits, life forces), i.e., *shen* 神, *hun* 魂, *po* 魄, *yi* 意 and *zhi* 志.³⁸ With the notion of *wu zang* the author pointed to a conceptual blending³⁹ which evidently served as an operational thread in the social fabric at the time – this was implicitly known (and deposited in the body) by many of Feng’s contemporaries.

Similarly, in medical texts – when dealing with excessive emotions (as for instance in cases of various forms of madness: *dian* 癲 and *kuang* 狂 etc.) that had been detected as pathological factors – physicians inquired into situations of either too little or over-abundant essences (*jingqi* 精氣 and *qi*) occurring within the various viscera.⁴⁰ And *vice versa*, in cases of a knotting, blocking or reversion of *qi* in an inner organ, or in the whole body, physicians could detect processes of excessive – and therefore disturbing – emotions. Most probably this was the reason for medical authors as well as writers of literary pieces to use *wu zang* (five viscera) as a direct denominator of the emotions. By *wu zang* they evoked a whole cluster of finely grained knowledge regarding emotional mechanisms and functions that were thought to be taking place within the five inner viscera, and that were also employed in diagnostic and therapeutic practice.

Thus, if translating the quoted phrase 不知五臟如何, 先見四肢不舉: “If you don’t know how she feels inside, just look first at her motionless limbs,”⁴¹ we miss the intensely corporeal dimension of emotions and suffering expressed in the sentence. Disregarding these specific corporeal aspects of emotions would mean impeding the possibility of approaching the very modes by which people felt in concrete terms at the respective time. If we miss to take “*wuzang*” as the significant denomination of the feelings seriously, we will surely miss to grasp the conceptual framework underlying this term, and as a result we come to misinterpret the notions of “an inner-outer division” which might mislead the reader to conceive the passage in terms of a hidden, private state of the soul.

Therefore, my proposed translation (“If you don’t know what her five viscera are like, first see how her four limbs do not rise (anymore)”) does not ignore the fact that the original sentence lacks a general denominator of emotions (*qing* or *qingzhi*). Instead, emotions are

³⁷ See Elisabeth HSU, “Zangxiang in the Canon of the Categories and Tendencies towards Body Centered Chinese Medicine”, *Ziran kexue shi yanjiu* 自然科学研究 (Studies of the History of Natural Science), 19.2, 2000, p. 165-187. Elisabeth HSU, “Tactility and the Body in Early Chinese Medicine”, *Science in Context*, 18.1 2005, p. 7-34.

³⁸ I avoid translating these five terms since this would require a lengthy discussion of their semantics in late imperial texts. However, on their semantics in the *Huangdi neijing*, see Paul U. UNSCHULD, Paul U. and Hermann TESSENOW, *Huang Di nei jing su wen: An Annotated Translation of Huang Di’s Inner Classic - Basic Questions*, 2 vols. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011, 1, p. 409.

³⁹ With regard to early Chinese thinking, Slingerland presents a promising example on how the mental space theory can deepen our insights into early Chinese thought: “Blending theory encompasses conceptual metaphor theory but goes beyond it to argue that all of human cognition – even literal and logical thought – involves the creation of mental spaces and mappings between them.” See Edward SLINGERLAND, *What Science Offers the Humanities. Integrating Body and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. xii and 176-185.

⁴⁰ Angelika MESSNER, *Medizinische Diskurse zu Irresein in China (1600-1930)*, (Münchener Ostasiatische Studien; vol. 78), Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000, p. 163-178.

⁴¹ See Cyril BIRCH, (trans.) *Stories from a Ming Collection. Translations of Chinese Short Stories published in the Seventeenth Century*, New York, Grove Press, 1958, p. 160.

signified by the conceptual term of “the Five Viscera” (*wu zang*).⁴² This conceptual blending of “social suffering and pain” with the “five viscera” can be viewed as a major cultural technique in Chinese history.⁴³

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the 17th century can be regarded as a particular time of cultural brilliance, and simultaneously of confusion, anxiety, upheaval and distress: The Manchu conquest of China is by no means limited to the year 1644 but it took a long period of war between the Qing Dynasty (Manchu) and the Ming Dynasty of China in the South. Simultaneously, the Ming Dynasty was confronted with peasant rebellions and bandits who threatened the whole country during several decades in the early 17th century; and with several famines, floods, economic chaos and epidemics. At the same time as I have noticed above, these events occurred in times when many of those scholars and students who waited for an official post actually had no chance of getting one since the number of official posts was not increased. Additionally, in the 17th century, an increasing number of officials and examination aspirants, so called Ming loyalist scholars who were loyal to the former Ming dynasty (1268-1644), refused to serve under the Manchu (1644-1911). Thus, a surplus of educated people was in urgent need of alternative careers.⁴⁴ Among them was a number who engaged in medical writing and practice. This is the context in which the following reflections are situated.

More than before, physicians in the 17th century had to deal with pain in the sense of emotional distress as well as in terms of concrete corporeal pain due to physical injuries. However, in terms of conceptions, no conceptual difference between the framing of pain and the framing of emotional processes is perceived in medical writings and literary accounts of the time, respectively. This is evidenced by a number of literary writings and accounts, including the *Yangzhou riji* 揚州十日記 (Record on the Ten Day (Massacre) at Yangzhou), 1645.⁴⁵ According to the author of this account, in the course of this massacre nearly 800,000 people died. Emotional suffering in the form of pain was basically conceived as a visceral process. This view resembles the conceptual framework that physicians in 17th century China used to understand occurrences of pain and suffering that they were diagnosing and treating.⁴⁶ Pain is denominated in terms of *tong* 痛 and *shang* 傷, which both refer to physical pain, mental despair as well as suffering. *Shang*, the term for a physical wound, could also mean to grieve or to mourn. In tune with what we have already learned about perceptions of emotion distress above, the terms used here to describe pain and suffering point, once again, to their

⁴² Translations newer than Birch's do not fail to explicitly recognize the five viscera as they appear in the original text. See for instance Shuhui YANG and Yunqin YANG (trans.), *2000 Stories Old and New. A Ming Dynasty Collection. Compiled by Feng Menglong (1574-1646)*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2000, p. 465: “The condition of her five vital organs was not readily apparent, but her four limbs visibly went limp.” However, my exercise in translation critique emphasizes the “*wuzang*” as dominant conceptual marker of feeling. This aspect is not being reflected in the latter translation either.

⁴³ See Ning YU, *From Body to Meaning in Culture*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2009, p. 34.

⁴⁴ For detailed information on the numbers of candidates who never got an official post see ELMAN, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 141.

⁴⁵ On the language on pain within the *Yangzhou shiri* see Dorothy KO, “The Subject of Pain”, in David Der-wei WANG and Shang WEI (eds.), *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation. From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond*. Cambridge, Mass. And London, Harvard University Press, 2005, p. 480-483; Angelika C. MESSNER, “Towards a History of the Corporeal Dimensions of Emotions: The Case of Pain”, in *Aspects of Emotion in Late Imperial China, Asiatische Studien/Etudes asiatiques* LXVI-4, 2012, p. 943-972.

⁴⁶ On pain in early medical texts see HSU, *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 15–19.

visceral localization. “Emotional” pain was perceived – once more in the words of Feng Menglong – “as though the lungs and liver had been pierced” (*ru ku ganfei* 如剗肝肺).⁴⁷

Looking into medical writings of the same period and geographic area, we come across the writings of Chen Shiduo’s 陳士鐸 (1627-1707). Chen’s biographical data are not recorded in official accounts. Thus, we must rely on a passage within the Shanyin 山陰縣志⁴⁸ Gazetteer of 1804, saying that he died at the age of 80. We find further hints regarding his year of birth within the paratext apparatus. The *Shanyin* 山陰 Gazetteer of 1804 lists 64 titles by Chen Shiduo, from which 8 are extant today. Although we cannot reconstruct an unbroken line along which we could trace the history of his writings and his biography, we can, however, know for sure that Chen lived at the time when physicians in Jiangnan loosely gathered in webs around Suzhou prefecture.⁴⁹ Chen must have been a well-known physician, at least in the opinion of the compilers of the largest surviving encyclopedia, the *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (presented to the throne in 1726, about 20 years after Chen’s death). Chen’s writing appears within several contexts in this encyclopedia.⁵⁰

His writings show that even in the worst cases of (emotional) pain this was diagnosed as disharmonies among the inner viscera. For instance, when people could not verbally express themselves any more because of extreme pain, he, as a physician, turned his attention to the area of the chest and stomach, where the five *yin* viscera are located. The subsequent passage derives from the long second chapter in the *Bianzheng lu* 辨証錄 (A Record of Differentiating Diseases, 1687).⁵¹ This passage provides evidence for the polysemy of “heart-pain” in terms of experiencing and “doing emotions”.

When someone [suffers] extreme pain in the heart, the suffering is such that he does not want to live any more. He screams the whole night, and tears and mucus incessantly pour from his eyes. People think that this must be due to a possession

⁴⁷ See *Qingshi*, *op. cit.*, 6/178.

⁴⁸ The cultural center Shanyin 山陰 together with Kuaiji 會稽 since the 16th century – was one of the most wealthy prefectures (*xian* 縣) in this southern region. Shaoxing since late 18th century was the most populated prefecture of the province. See James H. COLE, *Shaohsing: Competition and Cooperation in Nineteenth-Century China*. [The Association for Asian Studies Monograph No. XLIV] Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1986, p. 6. Shanyin and Kuaiji were part of the prefecture Shaoxing 紹興, which since Song-times was also named Zhedong 浙東 (lit. east of the Zhe-river, or East-Zhejiang); during Qing-times Shaoxing, was divided into eight districts, one of eleven prefectures (*fu* 府), which together formed the province Zhejiang. West-Zhejiang and South -Jiangsu were subsumed as Zhexi 浙西.

⁴⁹ Yuän-ling CHAO, *Medicine and Society in Late Imperial China*. UMI Dissertation, 1995, p. 169-174, shows evidence for a medical community in Suzhou and for webs of connections with others from outside of Suzhou.

⁵⁰ Chen described various states of emotional distress, especially among scholars who did not achieve what they were expected to, or widows and nuns who lived under special conditions, and thereby showed his involvement in a world of permanent danger. Chen appears in 141 passages, under the sub-category *yibu* 醫部 (Medicine) within the category *yishu* 藝術 (Künste und Berufe), under the main section Arts and sciences (*bowu* 博物), under several subsections such as “Emotions” (*qingzhi men* 情志門) and “Madness” (*diankuang men* 癲狂門), “Ulcer” (*jumen* 疽門), Epilepsy (*xianmen* 癇門) and moreover “Warm diseases, epidemics” (*wenyi men* 瘟疫門). All the respective passages are quoted from the *Shishi milu* 石室秘錄 (Secret notes from the stone chamber). See *Gujin tushu jicheng* [1726] juan 321, 1988, vol. 42-46, juan 341, 54737-54749.

⁵¹ The textual history of the *Bianzheng lu* 辨証錄 (*Records of differentiating diseases*) starts probably in 1687. Chen himself dated the 4th prologue to the manuscript (which is no more extant today) as 1689. The first imprint was sponsored by Nian Xiyao 年希尧 (?-1739) in 1724. The earliest imprint still extant (in 14 *juan*) today is from 1748. See CHEN Shiduo 陳士鐸 *Bianzheng lu* 辨証錄 [Records of differentiating diseases]. Reprint of 1748 edition. In Changhua LIU et al. (éd.), *Chen Shiduo yixue quanshu* 陳士鐸醫學全書 [Complete medical works of Chen Shiduo], Beijing, Zhongguo zhongyiyao chubanshe, 1999.

by fire-demons. Yet, actually, it is the fire which attacks the heart. What was the cause [for this]? The uneasiness was caused by the oppressed liver *qi*.

人有心痛之极苦不欲生彻夜呼號涕泗滂沱者人以為火邪作祟也然致此火邪之犯心者何故乎盖因肝氣之鬱而不舒⁵²

This passage on heart pain meticulously reveals how the heart as a physical organ was perceived as the site of suffering, and simultaneously also as the place of origin of the loud cries, tears and mucus. The tears and cries, as visible and audible signs of pain in the heart, in this case are not accompanied by the patients' verbal descriptions of the suffering. Instead of reporting his patients' accounts, the physician-author offers his own interpretation of the symptoms and their cause: thus, the heart is simultaneously the physical organ – corresponding to the Five Phases paradigm (*wu xing* 五行), with fire as its correlative phase – as well as the agent of crying out loudly due to pain.

According to the Five Phases paradigm, the heart is the child of the liver (*gan* 肝), correlated to the wood phase. Thus, it seems highly consistent that in the case presented above, the heart pain is diagnosed as a dysfunction of the liver *qi* being oppressed. This is diagnosed as the ultimate cause for the symptoms: due to the oppressed liver *qi*, the liver damages the heart.

The text continues as follows:

The heart correlates with Fire; the fire, however, should not blow too extremely. If the fire blows too hotly, it might lead to burning the heart. It happens very often that [the heart] burns and [the person] dies. Therefore, if the fire in the heart is flourishing too much, then the heart generally will dislike the fire, moreover [if] the heart additionally receives the supportive fire from the liver wood. Then the heart cannot absorb [all of this fire]. It cries for help from his four near neighbors [i.e. the kidneys, the lung, the spleen and the liver], and mucus and tears are delivered and pour down all over.

盖心属火，而火不可极火极反致焚心往往有自焚而死者故心火太旺火正为心之所恶而又得肝木之助火则心不能受必呼号求救于四邻自然涕泪交垂矣⁵³

Instead of the normal process of “generating the fire of the heart”, wood, correlated to the liver, overcomes the fire. The heart fire must not blow too hot. When, as in our case, the fire blows extremely hot, this would lead to “a burning of the heart” (*fexin* 焚心).⁵⁴

Because of the polysemy of the heart, *xin* 心, in this context requires translating *xintong* as “heart pain” with a double meaning, simultaneously denoting “emotional distress” and “pain in the viscera”. The physician apparently acts as a kind of mediator between the sufferer who cannot explain himself, and his family and neighbors, who (obviously) believe in demons and ghosts as the cause of this extreme pain. The physician transcends this level of description, moving on to the vast field of 陰 *yin*- and 陽 *yang*-viscera, namely the five viscera (*wu zang*) and to their connections with the border of the body via channel systems (*jingluo* 經絡). He interprets all the tears and mucus, all the crying and despair, by explaining these symptoms as “natural” articulations of disharmonious relations among the viscera. The heart remains the site of deepest despair, the locus of “self-burning or dissolving oneself”. In the quotation above this is referred to as “the suffering is such that he does not want to live any more”, and moreover to “it happens very often that [the heart] burns and [the person] dies”: here the heart is the cause of despair and pain. Yet the physician's explanation turns the heart itself into a

⁵² My translation, See *Bianzheng lu*, *juan 2*, *Chen Shiduo yixue quanshu*, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 736.

⁵³ My translation. See *Bianzheng lu*, *juan 2*, *Chen Shiduo yixue quanshu*, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 736.

⁵⁴ See *Bianzheng lu*, *juan 2*, *Chen Shiduo yixue quanshu*, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 736.

kind of victim, namely, a victim of his neighbor, the liver. Thus, the heart's cries are filled with sense, and so is the extensive flow of tears together with the freely released mucus. Simultaneously, the physician's explanations open up the stage on which he himself is about to act, and on which he acts in an actual sense, seeking to weaken the liver's fire in order to relieve the heart.

Crying, weeping and wailing, in general, were viewed as spontaneous expressions of emotional states, such as worry and grief, frustration and disappointment.⁵⁵ Needless to say, the frequency of crying due to hunger and pain can easily be related to the socio-political context of the time, providing sufficient material for studies of this kind. In the 17th century, physicians dealt with the pain of lovesickness much in the same manner as with crying and weeping due to hunger.⁵⁶

Conclusion

This paper, as it moves at the crossroads of different texts including literary, philosophical and medical sources, argues that in times of upheaval, distress and suffering, people "made use of" a kind of practical knowledge for orientation, survival and cure. This was most probably the reason for the dominance of medical terms within the literary texts of the time. On the other hand, it did not discourage people from passionately demanding a society that appreciated people's rich feelings, as Feng Menglong most prominently did.

Moreover, the focus of this paper on "doing emotion" required paying specific attention to notions of bodily gestures, movements and behaviour through which emotions are "done", e.g. expressed and lived through. With this focus on the corporeal sediments of emotions, I showed strong evidence that people in times of distress and suffering in particular were concerned with their bodily fabric, which according to the emotion-knowledge in use at the time crucially comprised emotional processes of all kinds.

⁵⁵ For the distinction between *ku* 哭 (weeping) and *qi* 泣 (lamenting), whereby *ku* is an official ritualized action, and *qi* is a private action (with tears and sputum) in pre-Buddhist sources, see Christoph HARSMEIER, "Weeping and Wailing in Ancient China." In Halvor EIFRING (ed.), *Minds and Mentalities in Traditional Chinese Literature*. Beijing: Culture and Art Publishing House, 1999, p. 317-422. This distinction, however, has totally disappeared in medical writings.

⁵⁶ On the prevalence of food shortages in some areas in the 17th century, see Helen DUNSTAN, "The Late Ming Epidemics: A Preliminary Survey", *Ch'ing-shih wen- t'i* 3.3, 1979, p. 1-59; Angela Ki Che LEUNG, "Organized Medicine in Ming-Qing China: State and Private Medical Institutions in the Lower Yangtze Region", *Late Imperial China* 8.1, 1987, p. 133-166; William S. ATWELL, "International Bullion Flows and the Chinese Economy circa 1530-1650", *Past and Present* 95, 1982, p. 68-90; William S. ATWELL, "A Seventeenth-century 'General Crisis' in East Asia?", *Modern Asian Studies* 24.4, 1990, p. 661-682; Pierre Etienne WILL and Bin R. WONG, *Nourish the People: The State Civilian Granary System in China, 1665-1850*, Ann Arbor, Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan Press, 1991; Andrea JANKU, "'Heaven-Sent Diseases' in Late Imperial China: The Scope of the State and Beyond", in Christof MAUCH and Christian PFISTER (éd.), *Natural Disasters, Cultural Responses: Case Studies Toward a Global Environmental History*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009, p. 233-264.

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Résumé

Cet article emprunte de nouveaux chemins dans l'examen des connaissances et des pratiques émotionnelles dans l'histoire de la Chine. En prenant en considération cette double dimension, il explore d'une part l'intérêt marqué pour la sensibilité qui se manifeste au cours du XVI^e siècle et d'autre part les modalités de perception de la souffrance durant les longues décennies de la dramatique transition dynastique au début du XVII^e siècle.

En accordant aussi une attention particulière à la notion de gestualité corporelle (les mouvements et les comportements à travers lesquels les émotions existent, sont exprimées et sont vécues), cette double approche permet de croiser différents textes, dont des sources littéraires, philosophiques et médicales.

Portant un regard spécifique sur les sédimentations corporelles des émotions, je montre comment pendant la période observée (XVI^e-XVII^e siècles), les individus étaient d'abord attentifs aux processus physiques, et refusaient de suivre les schémas émotionnels venant du néoconfucianisme.

Abstract

Dealing with the overall question of how we can best approach emotion-knowledge (emotional knowledge) and emotion-practices (emotional practices) in Chinese history, this paper explores new paths to track. On both emotion-knowledge and emotion-practices in Chinese history, this paper explores new paths to track. Especially, the particular shift towards sensitivity in late 16th century, on the one hand, and on specific modes of suffering which were predominant during the long decades of the dramatic dynastic transition in early 17th century on the other hand.

This double-sited approach in conjunction with a focus on notions of bodily gestures, movements and behavior through which emotions were "done", e.g. expressed and lived through is a feasible way to moving at the crossroads of different texts including literary, philosophical and medical sources.

With a strong focus on the corporeal sediments of the emotions, I show evidence that people at the time under observation (16th and 17th centuries) in particular were concerned with their bodily fabric, and they refused to be guided by the Neo-Confucian perceptions of emotions.

Suggerendo nuovi percorsi di riflessione, quest'articolo esplora come approcciare le conoscenze e le pratiche emozionali nella storia cinese. Interroga al tempo stesso l'interesse alla sensibilità sviluppatosi durante il XVI secolo, ma anche la percezione della sofferenza durante i lunghi decenni della drammatica transizione dinastica all'inizio del XVII secolo.

Questo doppio approccio, dando ampio spazio alla nozione di gestualità fisica (i movimenti e i comportamenti grazie ai quali le emozioni sono vissute e si esprimono), permette d'incrociare fonti diverse tra cui testi letterari, filosofici e medici.

Attraverso l'attenzione alle sedimentazioni fisiche delle emozioni, mostro come durante il periodo storico analizzato (XVI secolo e XVII secolo) le persone erano preoccupate dalla loro dimensione fisica e rifiutavano di seguire la percezione delle emozioni suggerita dal neoconfucianesimo.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : connaissances émotionnelles, pratiques émotionnelles, mouvements et comportements en Chine, XVI^e siècle, XVII^e siècle, cinq viscères, culte des émotions, textes médicaux

Keywords : emotion-knowledge, emotion-practices, corporeal sediments, bodily gestures, movement and behavior in Chinese 16th and 17th century, five viscera, cult of emotions, medical texts