

# Researching the History of Chinese Logic: The Role of Wen Gongyi in the Establishment of New Methodologies

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## Abstract

During the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the progressive intellectuals, who were confronted with the all-embracing crisis of Chinese society, yearned to find the new truth within the Western ideas on the one hand, and the works of the classical Chinese philosophy of the pre-Qin era on the other. These social and historical circumstances started the research into the history of Chinese logic. In the process of these investigations, it soon became clear that more appropriate methodologies were needed to explore Chinese logic, as those used for researching Western logic were not suitable for the task. The revival and modernization of such methods took place in the latter half of the 20th century, and one of the most important figures in these processes was Professor Wen Gongyi, who was hence one of the pioneers of modern research into the history of Chinese logic. Therefore, the present article also offers a short presentation of his biography and his contributions to the development of the research into traditional Chinese logic.

**Keywords:** Chinese logic, traditional Chinese methodology, historiography, Wen Gongyi

## Raziskovanje zgodovine kitajske logike: vloga Wen Gongyija pri vzpostavljanju novih metodologij

### Izvleček

V obdobju dinastije Qing (1644–1911) so si napredni izobraženci, ki so se soočali z vseobsegajočo krizo kitajske družbe, močno prizadevali najti novo resnico v zahodnih idejah na eni strani in na drugi v klasičnih filozofskih delih iz obdobja pred dinastijo Qing. Te družbene in zgodovinske okoliščine so dale zagon raziskavam o zgodovini kitajske logike. V poteku teh raziskav je kmalu postalo jasno, da so za raziskovanje kitajske logike potrebne primernejše metodologije, saj so bile tiste, ki so jih uporabljali v raziskavah zahodne logike, popolnoma neprimerne za to nalogo. Obujanje in modernizacija teh metod sta potekala v drugi polovici 20. stoletja. Med najpomembnejšimi osebnostmi, ki so prispevale k temu procesu, je bil profesor Wen Gongyi, ki tako velja za enega od pionirjev modernih raziskav o zgodovini kitajske logike. Zato bom v tem članku podal krajšo predstavitev njegovega življenja ter njegovih prispevkov k razvoju raziskav o tradicionalni kitajski logiki.

**Ključne besede:** kitajska logika, tradicionalna kitajska metodologija, zgodovinopisje, Wen Gongyi

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## Introduction: Historical and Intellectual Background

In classical Chinese theory, there was no term for logic or “Chinese logic”, and the modern Chinese word *luoji* 邏輯 is a phonetic translation of the Western term. The appearance and investigation of “Chinese logic” are a matter of the 19th century, and therefore belong in the era of modern Chinese history.

Following the First Opium War of 1839–1842, great changes took place within Chinese society. During this period, China was confronted with the gradual spread of Western ideas into the East, which also included a systematic introduction of Western logic.

This gradual import of Western ideas naturally also involved the introduction of Western logic. The first person to introduce Western logic into the Chinese system of thought during this period was Yan Fu 嚴復. He not only presented the importance of understanding logic on the basis of the current urgent problems in China, but also established academic organizations which were involved in adopting the logical knowledge of the time. He translated the most prominent works of Western logic and systematically introduced this discipline to others in China. His translations of J. S. Mills' *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* was first published in 1905, and followed in 1909 by his translation of W. S. Jovons' *Primers of Logic*.

These translations, which found their way to China at the beginning of the 20th century, represented the first systematic introduction of traditional Western logic, which was based on the elementary contents of Aristotelian logic. They not only provided a solid ground for a new, more integral understanding of this discipline in China, but also paved the way for certain progressive intellectuals, who started to rethink traditional Chinese theories from the viewpoint of Western logic. Thus, a very important precondition for the beginning of the research into the history of Chinese logic was fulfilled.

The central subject of this research was concentrated on the investigation of Moist logic, which could be found in the disputations of this philosophical school. However, the Moist school was forcibly shut down after the end of the Han dynasty. Thus, their main work, *Mozzi*, was also discarded, drowned in the long, deep river of Chinese history. It was only at the end of the Qing dynasty that it was revived by the representatives of the so-called Hanxue movement within the scope of new, reflective theoretical investigations in the classical philosophical schools from the pre-Qin era.

Concerning *Mozzi*, their research deserves our attention in two aspects. Firstly, they (to a certain extent) managed to overthrow the orthodox Confucian interpretation

of this book; within this intellectual mainstream, *Mozi* was regarded as a “false doctrine”.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the theoretical reinterpretations of the Hanxue scholars managed to re-legitimize this work, as well as the Moist School as a whole. Thus, Moist philosophy was finally adequately evaluated and was once again rendered its proper position within the system of traditional Chinese thought. Secondly, the Hanxue theoreticians from the Qing period were diligent and accurate scholars, who were strict at applying the method of provable evidence. In a few decades of difficult and tiresome work, they updated *Mozi* with a huge amount of qualitatively outstanding commentaries. Due to their efforts—and consequently also due to the achievements of their followers, who were specialized in the investigations of the Moist School—*Mozi*, which was always regarded as lacking both traditional mediation as well as comprehensible commentaries or interpretations, became a readable book once again.

Their work paved the way and established a solid basis for the entire modern and even contemporary research into Moist philosophy. Since Moist theory represents one of the most important issues in classical Chinese logic, their work also provided a basic fulfilment of the second crucial condition for investigations into the history of traditional Chinese logic.

After the First Opium War, 1839–1842, “learning from the West” was the most visible tendency in Chinese culture. This resulted in the following question: what is the basis of the so-called “Western”, or “new” learning? Certain intellectuals believed that the elementary foundation of Western culture was to be found in the spirit of natural sciences, which were capable of providing methods for “eliminating falseness and preserving the truth”.<sup>2</sup> Logic was seen as the embodiment of such spirit and its methods. Yan Fu quoted Francis Bacon, saying that logic was “the method of all methods, and the science of all sciences”. Therefore, it was only natural for logic to become one of the most influential discourses within the scope of “Western learning”, which gradually spread to the East. But Chinese scholars, who focused on studying Western logic, could hardly secede from their habituated way of thinking, which was rooted in traditional Chinese

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1 This was, among other issues, probably connected with the fact that the Mohist, and especially the Later Mohist School were much more analytical in their approaches than Confucianism, in the sense that they tended to proto-theorize their philosophical arguments with an analytical language (Rošker 2015a, 305), without placing too much emphasis to ethics and morality, which was in the forefront of Confucian concerns.

2 However, this—sometimes much too naïve—faith in the consequent and straightforward Western reliance on “truth” was certainly linked to China’s confrontation with European economic and military supremacy in the 19th century, which, among other issues, often invoked a period of self-criticism among Chinese intellectuals (Dessein 2020, 252).

culture.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, a reflective search of those elements within traditional Chinese thought, which could be understood as compatible with Western logic, became one of their crucial theoretical issues. This can be seen as another indispensable element, which contributed to the development of the research into the history of Chinese logic.

As follows from the above, the main factors which contributed to the development of investigating the history of Chinese logic can be found in the gradual spread of Western ideas to the East, which resulted in deeper research into classical Chinese philosophy, as well as in the revival of Mozi. Furthermore, the inquisitive respect shown toward the Western learning, which was brought to life by enlightened Chinese intellectuals, accompanied by reflective reinvestigation of their own traditional thought, is also of great importance in this respect.

### Establishing Research into the History of Chinese Logic

The 20th century was the initial era of research into the history of Chinese logic. The most important representatives of this work were Liang Qichao 梁啟超 and Hu Shi 胡適.

Concerning classical Chinese logic, the following works of Liang Qichao can be named as the most influential: *Mozi's Ethics* (*Mozizhi lunlixue* 墨子之倫理學 (1904)), *Mozi's Studies* (*Mozi xuean* 墨子學案 (1921)) and *The Interpretation of Mozi* (*Mozi xiaoshi* 墨子校釋 (1922)). Hu Shi's main work in this field includes *The History of Logic from the Pre-Qin Era* (*Xian Qin mingxue shi* 先秦名學史), which was completed in 1917, but published in 1922, *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy, Part I* (*Zhongguo zhexue shi da gang* 中國哲學史大綱 (1919)), and *A New View of the Chapter 'Xiao qu' in the Book of Mozi* (*Mozi xiaoqu pian xin gu* 墨子小取篇新詁 (1919)).

Their direct successors did not manage to overcome their theories, neither concerning the elementary methods, nor in respect of their basic interpretations. This is why this period can be regarded as the initial era of research into the history of Chinese logic.

According to the basic opinion, which imbues these works, the classical Chinese “disputes” (*bian xue* 辯學) and the traditional “theories of naming” (*ming xue* 名學) were equivalent to Western logic. Therefore, the attempts to construct a Chinese theory of logic, based on the reinterpretations of classical Chinese disputes and the theories of names—mainly those from *The Moist Disputes* (*Mo bian* 墨

3 By the late 1920s, however, various forms of modern Western logic had already been widely established throughout the most progressive Chinese intellectual and academic circles (Vrhovski 2020, 232).

辯)—through the optics of Western, especially traditional European logic, which is grounded on the contents of Aristotelian theories, became part of the mainstream of cognitional and methodological issues in researching the history of Chinese logic. But some scholars in this period already asserted that the book *The Moist Disputes* was a classic, which was used by the Moist school for debates, and that *The Book of Disputes* (*Bian jing* 辯經) was nothing more than a handbook for the art of disputation. This opinion gave rise to further considerations as regards the relation between *The Moist Disputes* and traditional Western logic, as well as the connection of this logic and the logical elements, which were contained in *The Moist Disputes*.

### Expansion: New Methods and New Approaches

New developments in the research into the history of Chinese logic appeared in the 1930s. The most important works in this field published during this period were Wang Zhanghuan's 王章煥 *Survey of Ethics* (*Lunlixue da quan* 倫理學大全 (1930)), Feng Youlan's 馮友蘭 *History of Chinese Philosophy, Part I* (*Zhongguo zhhexue shi, shang ce* 中國哲學史 / 上策 / (1931)), Guo Zhanpo's 郭湛波 *History of the Art of Disputes of the pre-Qin Era* (*Xian Qin bianxue shi* 先秦辯學史 (1932)), Tan Jiefu's 譚戒甫 *Simple Explanation of the Moist Classic* (*Mo jing yi jie* 墨經易解 (1935)), Zhang Dongsun's 張東蓀 *Thought and Culture* (*Sixiang yu wenhua* 思想與文化 (1938)), and *Different Logics and Chinese Rationality* (*Bu tongde luoji bing lun Zhongguo lixue* 不同的邏輯並論中國理學 (1939)).

The above-mentioned works involved different tendencies. The first one followed the basic cognitional and methodological guidelines of Liang and Hu and was based upon the opinion that the classical Chinese disputes and theories of naming were equivalent to Western logic. The second tendency was based upon the conviction, that it was wrong to interpret those discourses according to the model of traditional Western logic, and that it was necessary to reconstruct the autochthonous Chinese logic. One of the most important representatives of this conviction was Zhang Dongsun (see Rošker 2015b, 110). He asserted that logic depended upon culture, and that different cultures gave rise to different types of logic. According to his opinion, logic should be interpreted with respect to the particular culture in which it arose. Tan Jiefu was also against comparisons of classical disputes and theories of naming with traditional Western logic, and stressed the independence of Chinese logic. However, he did believe that *The Moist Disputes* were to a great extent similar to traditional Indian logic.

Although the concrete expositions that derived from their basic prepositions were not always absolutely valid, Tan Jiefu's and Zhang Dongsun's thesis about the "independence" of logic, contained in the ancient Chinese theories, as well as their stressing of the necessity of cultural interpretations of logic, were of utmost importance. To a certain extent, their arguments represent an improvement of Liang's and Hu's theories. Since they had a very stimulating effect on further studies in modern Chinese thought, their contribution should not be underestimated in this regard.

### The Period of Stagnancy, Revival and New Development

Following the beginning of the anti-Japanese war in the 1940's, the economic and cultural situation in China became extremely difficult, which brought the research into the history of Chinese logic to a standstill. Therefore, only a few publications from that period are worth mentioning, e.g. Zhang Shizhao's 章士釗 *The Essential Issues of Logic* (*Luoji zhiyao* 邏輯指要 (1943)), Guo Moruo's 郭沫若 *Review of the Theories of Naming and Disputes* (*Ming bian sichao pipan* 名辯思潮批判 (1944)), as well as Hou Wailu's 侯外廬, Zhao Jibin's 趙紀彬 and Du Guoxiang's 杜國庠 *General History of Chinese Thought* (*Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中國思想通史 (1947)).

Zhang Shizhao stressed the equality of the theories of naming and traditional Western logic. He strove for a systematic ordering of Chinese "laws of naming" in accordance with the framework of traditional Western logic, while Guo Moruo, on the contrary, stressed the differences between traditional Western and traditional Chinese logic. In his opinion, *The Moist Disputes* is a book about the art of disputation, i.e. about the methods of disputation; therefore, it could not be equated with the strict system of Western logic. Hou Wailu and several other scholars, however, was one of the few who explicitly pointed out the tight connection between traditional Chinese logic and epistemology.

Following the 1950s, research into the history of Chinese logic gradually began its revival. The first work in this regard, which was published at the beginning of the decade, was Shen Youding's 沈有鼎 *The Logic of the Moist Classic* (*Mo jingde luoji xue* 墨經的邏輯學). The author believed that this Moist work represented the summit of the development of the classical Chinese logic. His book was based upon the hypothesis that the laws of human cognition and the form of logic do not depend on an individual nation or class. On the other hand, it also stressed the special influence of particular languages on the different modes of logical expression.

In 1957, Lu Jianfeng's 盧劍峰 book *The Moist Formal Logic* (*Mo jiade xingshi luoji* 墨家的形式邏輯) was published. It followed the opinion that the art of disputes, as formulated by Mozi in his Moist classic, was logic, and that it set up a basis for Chinese formal logic.

Wang Dianji's 汪奠基 work *The History of Chinese Logical Thought* (*Zhongguo luoji sixiang shi* 中國邏輯思想史) was written already in the 1960s but was not published until 1979. Although the author believed that the so-called disputes of the Moist school were a kind of logic, he also clearly asserted that Chinese logic, including the Moist form, had autonomous particularities, and that its systematic reconstruction does not need a comparison with Western formal logic.

Wen Gongyi's 溫公頤 *The History of Logic from the Pre-Qin Era* (*Xian Qin luoji shi* 先秦邏輯史), *The History of Ancient Chinese Logic* (*Zhongguo gu luoji shi* 中國邏輯史) and *The History of the Mediaeval Chinese Logic* (*Zhongguo jingu luoji shi* 中國近古邏輯史) were published in 1983, 1989 and 1993, respectively. In the first of these he asserted that it was always wrong to compare Moist disputation or logic to Western or Indian logic, because the mode of logical thought was tightly connected to the linguistic expressions of particular languages. In his opinion, each particular language has its own idiomatic structure and expressions, and therefore the particular structural organisations of each single type of logic differ from each other. In the same book, we also encounter (for the very first time) the differentiation between the “Moist logical thought” and the “logical thought of the theories of correct naming”. On this basis, the author drew a new outline of the development of logic in the pre-Qin era.

During the 1990s, a number of Chinese scholars started to review the past research into the history of Chinese logic. They began to review the previously performed work and discuss its results. The following questions appeared based upon this reflection:

- What is the kind of logic that is actually contained in the ancient disputes and theories of naming?
- Are those discourses equal to Western logic?
- Are the thoughts expressed in ancient Chinese theories the same as those expressed in traditional Western logic?
- Do the Chinese theories of logic have an autonomous quality, and how is this quality expressed?
- Which methods should be applied in the research into Chinese logic?
- What is the connection between the research into the history of Chinese logic and the establishment of a new Chinese culture?

The above-mentioned problems are only some examples of a whole array of other, similar questions, that turned up during the 1990s. They still attract the attention of many theoreticians, and continue to promote deeper investigations and accelerate the more sophisticated development of further research into the history of Chinese logic.

### Elaboration of Crucial Research Methods

The “gradual irruption of Western ideas into the East”, which generated the initial research into the history of Chinese logic after the 19th century, also provided Chinese scholars with a number of related research tools and methods. Above all, this meant that they tried to explain Chinese logic through the optic of the “gradually irrupted Western ideas” (i.e. traditional Western logic). The basic characteristic of this method was “to compare ancient Chinese theories to the new laws of European or Western thought”. The essence of this kind of “comparison” within the research into the history of Chinese logic was basically the application of elementary traditional Western logical concepts, principles and systems, which were used as a basic pattern to explain and reconstruct the classical Chinese disputes and theory of names, with the single aim to show that those ancient Chinese discourses were actually equal to traditional Western logic.

We have to admit that under the given historical conditions, the application of this method was in fact meaningful to a certain extent. For example, it led towards an important conceptual shift in this research: the investigations of traditional disputes and theories of naming escaped the frame of the general research in ancient classics and found their way to completely new developments. It also caused researchers of classical disputes and theories of naming to no longer concentrate solely on commenting on old texts; at the same time, they started to pay greater attention to analysing and expounding their semantic systems. It was also very effective regarding the fact that the Chinese academic world became acquainted with traditional Western logic, for it opened a new way of thinking for the future research into the history of Chinese logic. It provided elementary support, as well as a solid basis for further investigations in this field.

However, on the other hand, this method also showed severe deficiencies. Although the classical Chinese disputes and theories of naming have certain similarities with traditional Western logic, it is still impossible to regard them as completely equal. They are quite different in regard to their objects and contents, and thus cannot be seen as the same discipline. The object of the Chinese theories of naming can be found in the name. Their main problem is the relation between the

name and the actuality, and the central content of these theories is “the correction of names”. The main object of the art of disputation are arguments, its basic problem is the exploration of the essential quality and functionality of disputes. The elementary contents of this discipline are centred on the principles and methods of disputation. However, the object of traditional Western logic is to be found in the proper form, as well as in accurate principles of cognition, while its basic content is to be found in efficient reasoning. Therefore, the above-mentioned method, which was based on the complete equalization of disputes and theories of naming with traditional Western logic, muddled up different disciplines with different objects and contents. Thus, it is understandable that the application of this method with regard to the comparison of both kinds of logic was not necessarily free from certain habitual elements. These elements not only impeded an accurate comprehension of classical Chinese disputations and theories of naming, they also hindered the proper understanding of the logical theories contained in these ancient Chinese discourses.

If we want to overcome the above-mentioned deficiencies and deepen the investigations into the history of Chinese logic, it is necessary to change the method of explaining the classical Chinese discourses and reconstructing the Chinese logic solely according to the laws of traditional Western logic. For this sake, we have to be aware of the importance of historical analysis and culturally bounded interpretations.

## Historical Analysis and Culturally Bounded Interpretations

The so-called culturally bounded interpretation is based on the presumption that Chinese logic is an organic part of traditional Chinese culture. Such interpretations attempt to find a rational explanation for Chinese logic, and take into account the characteristic elements of traditional Chinese philosophy, ethics, political theories, linguistics and traditional scientific technology.

A culture is always a culture of a certain specific historical period. This is why every culturally bounded interpretation has to involve a historical analysis. This means that such an interpretation of Chinese logic sees this discipline as deeply rooted in the geopolitical context of the historical period in which it was established. Theoreticians who work on culturally bounded interpretations have to form concrete analyses of the specific conditions, which determined the social, economic, political, and cultural life in that period. Moreover, they have to elaborate precise analyses of the influence of all these elements on scholars and thinkers who created the Chinese theories of logic.

Historical analyses and culturally bounded interpretations by no means exclude comparative research, but this has to be grounded on a clear awareness of the special social and cultural background which created and determined Chinese logic.

The reason for the necessity of historical and culturally bounded interpretations in the investigations of the history of Chinese logic is connected to the requirement for a proper understanding of theoretical thought. Thus, we have to understand its basis, which can be found in the concrete social circumstances of the thinkers who brought it to our attention, as well as in the social problems they were confronted with. We have to understand the characteristic features of their specific cultural background and their motivations. Only once we have understood the socio-cultural factors which formed and determined those ancient theories will we be able to understand their specific quality. The understanding of these factors also represents an urgent precondition to an objective and correct interpretation of the texts which contain ancient theories. The problems that arise cannot be solved solely on the basis of their comparison with different, foreign ideas (so much less if the respective comparisons are based on the mode of identification). Therefore, a proper understanding of this academic thought must also be grounded on the concentration upon historical and culturally bounded interpretations. In this respect, the research into the history of Chinese logic is by no means an exception. The application of the above-mentioned methods is even more important if we take into account the close connection between logic and culture.

This close connection is determined by the wholeness of culture, as well as by the special position of logic as one of the main forming factors of this wholeness. In a broad sense culture represents the totality of all human activities and their results within a civilization. It is formed by mutual connections of many different elements, which are compounded by certain modes of interaction. It represents an entity or a system of special qualities and functions. Logic as a discipline, investigating the various modes of reasoning, represents an important part or element, which takes part in the formation of this entity. It is tightly connected to the different modes, and even with the different customs of thinking, and represents an important content of cognition. On the other hand, specific manners of cognition are even deeper and more elemental factors of every individual culture.

The systematic nature and the wholeness of culture reveal that the vital basic of its regulated totality has been compounded by a number of important culturally bounded elements, including logic. These elements have a great effect and a huge influence upon the changes and development of every culture. On the other hand, logic, as one of these elements, is regulated by the totality of culture. It needs the systematic nature and wholeness of culture as a vital precondition, for this

determines its existence, its development and enables it to express its meaning.

The regulative function of culture determines every single logical system, which is to a certain degree always also a product of certain historical circumstances and therefore has a universal, as well as a specific side. The European logician Anton Dumitriu expressed the plurality of logic very clearly. Proceeding from the history of the development of logic, he wrote:

We have already expounded two thousand five hundred years of the development of logic, and this period have been able to see many different ways, in which human beings constructed and interpreted this discipline. It is obvious that there are huge differences between different periods ... Each single stage in the developmental process of logic reflects a specific historical background. (Dumitriu 1977, 12)

The well-known contemporary Chinese logician Zhou Liquan also pointed out:

Each proper understanding and each science have to apply and respect the correct forms of reasoning and laws, which are the object of logical inquiry and represent a common good of entire mankind. Therefore, logic itself, which reflects the proper ways of reasoning and their laws, is also common to the humanity as a whole. In this sense, there is no discrepancy between the particular logic of different nations, classes or individuals. But, on the other hand, if we look at logic as a system of knowledge, it is always a product of a certain historical era, certain nation or a certain individual and therefore necessarily comprises of the characteristic features of this era, nationality, or individual person. Consequently, the historical process of the development of logic produced a number of different logical classifications, which can be summarised in three large systems: the Chinese, the Indian and the Greek logical system. (Zhou 1987, 535)

No matter whether dealing with the above-mentioned “huge differences”, or with “the characteristic features of an era, nationality, or individual person”—each inquiry always has to be grounded on a specific part of logic, which is formed by the specific historical, social and cultural background.

On this background, the above-mentioned universality of logical thinking comes into existence. On this reasoning, all human beings apply the same, universal components and functions, which are always grounded on common elementary classifications and principles. Simultaneously, these universal features also construct the universality of basic logical theories and contents of thought. On the

other hand the above-mentioned specific nature of an individual logic points out the discrepancies between different logical traditions, which were derived from particular social and cultural traditions. The most important differences in this respect are the particularity, based on the prevailing classification of reasoning, the specific modes of its expression, differences in the particular processes of their change and development, and so on. Only the consideration of the specific historical and cultural backgrounds, which formed and determined different logical traditions, enables us to analyse and interpret a certain logical tradition. Proceeding from this basis, we can understand not only the universality, but also the specific features of different logical traditions. Only this kind of inward knowledge enables us to explain logic in a proper way. Therefore, the research into Chinese logic needs to be grounded on historical analysis and culturally bounded interpretations.

### **Wen Gongyi and the Research into the History of Chinese Logic at the Nankai University**

This important method, which takes into account the cultural conditionality of different types of logical reasoning, can be traced back to the cultural studies of the aforementioned scholar Zhang Dongsun. However, in the second half of the 20th century it was also continued and upgraded by several scholars, mainly those belonging to the so-called “Nankai School of Chinese logics”. The founder of this school and its basic methodological approaches was Professor Wen Gongyi 温公颐 (1904–1996). Hence, in this last part of the present paper, we must—at least briefly—introduce his pioneering research work in the field of the cultural conditionality of Chinese logic.

Wen Gongyi was a contemporary Chinese philosopher, logician and teacher. He worked as a professor at the following institutions: Beijing University, The College of Educational Sciences in Beijing, The Girls College for Educational Sciences in Hebei and the Hebei Branch of the College for Educational Sciences in Beijing, where he also served as the Chair of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature. At Nankai University in Tianjin, he worked as a professor and Chair at the Department of Philosophy. In addition, he was the vice-president and academic adviser of the Chinese Association of Logic.

In his early years his main research fields were Western and Chinese philosophy, especially in the field of ethics. The most important works that he published at that time, were: *An Outline of Philosophy* (*Zhexue gailun* 哲学概论 (1937)), *Moral Teachings* (*Daode xue* 道德学 (1937)) and *Logic* (*Luoji xue* 逻辑学 (1958)).

Although his *History of Chinese Philosophy* (*Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中国哲学史) was already given to the publisher in 1994, it was never published.

In the 1970's, Professor Wen Gongyi started to focus his research on the history of Chinese philosophy and logic. After this period, most of his work was on various investigations into the history of Chinese logic. In the 1980s he published the following titles: *History of Logic from the pre-Qin Era* (*Xianqin luoji shi* 先秦逻辑史 (1983)), *The Medieval History of Classical Chinese Logic* (*Zhongguo gu luoji shi* 中国中古逻辑史 (1989)), *The Premodern History of Classical Chinese* (*Zhongguo jingu luoji shi* 中国近古逻辑史 (1993)), and the first textbook on the history of Chinese logic entitled *A Textbook on the History of Chinese Logic* (*Zhongguo luoji shi jiaocheng* 中国逻辑史教程 (1988)).

In addition to his academic research work, Professor Wen Gongyi raised a competent professional team of young researchers and established the basic conditions for further investigations into the history of Chinese logic.

Due to his dedicated tutorial efforts, his work has been carried on to the present day. This work was based upon his previous research results and carried out by a number of specialized, independent-thinking researchers, working at the Department of Philosophy at Nankai University. Thus, the Chinese academic world has long regarded this department as an important research and education institution in the field of the history of Chinese logic.

With respect to the research methodology applied to the history of Chinese logic, Professor Wen Gongyi opposed the method of comparing Chinese logic to Western and Indian logic at all costs. He believed that the application of this method alone could not provide an explanation for the genuine essence of traditional Chinese logic. He was convinced, that

logic forms a tool of human rational thought; it is a bridge that helps mankind obtain new knowledge. Thus, it naturally contains universal features of the entire mankind. The three main branches of logic systems that can be found in the Western (and Eastern) traditions of thought have therefore a number of common points. However, the cognitive tools have been tightly connected to the languages of the various societies, in which they came to see the day of light. Every language is determined by specific social and historical particularities. Therefore, different logic systems can not be entirely the same in respect to their organizational structure.<sup>4</sup> (Wen 1983, 12)

4 逻辑是人类正确思维的工具，是人类求知的桥梁，当然它具有全人类性的特点，东西方三支逻辑体系当然有它们的共同点....但思维的逻辑工具是和民族的语言密切结合的。而世界各民族的语言就各有其社会历史不同的特点，因而在逻辑的组织结构上就不会完全一样。

He also firmly believed, that “the origins of logic theories could not be subjective products of certain logicians, but were tightly connected to the social actualities, in which these logicians lived.”<sup>5</sup> (ibid.)

On the basis of such an understanding, he appealed for the establishment of a unified view of history and logic in his research into the history of Chinese logic. In his opinion, the interpretations of the various theories by ancient Chinese thinkers had to be based upon the considerations of specific social conditions and actualities by which they were influenced in their time.

Proceeding from Professor Wen Gongyi’s thought, the Nankai School clarified and defined the following new ideas concerning research into the history of Chinese logic:

1. There is a tight connection between logic and culture; the development of logic is defined by culture. On the other hand, the development of culture is also profoundly influenced by logic.
2. Different traditions of logic have been marked by universal, as well as specific, particular elements.
3. Therefore, “historical analysis and cultural interpretation” should be applied as the basic method in researching the history of Chinese logic; in the comparison of Chinese logic to other logic systems, one should be focused upon the similarities, but should also pay attention to their differences.
4. Any research into logic should consider the cultural interpretations. To the same extent, cultural studies should also reflect the developments in logic.

## Conclusion

There can be little doubt that understanding ancient Chinese practices and theories of thought has broad cross-cultural value. There has always been considerable debate about the proper approach to classical Chinese logic. This debate corresponds with various phases of the reception of Western logic in the Chinese scholarly community. However, a survey of the views involved shows how rich and fascinating this discourse is and how diverse the interpretative spectrum (Rošker 2015, 309). This article has clearly demonstrated that the reconstruction of classical Chinese logic offers a paradigmatic case for the epistemic shifts that continue to shape interpretations of Chinese intellectual history. It thus remains one of the

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5 逻辑理论的提出，不是逻辑学家主观自生的东西，它和逻辑学家的实践密切相关。

most important areas of research in contemporary sinology, Chinese philosophy, and transcultural methodology.

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