



CHINA STUDIES

A SHORT HISTORY OF CLASSICAL CHINESE LITERATURE

Feng Yuan-chun



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

A SHORT HISTORY OF CLASSICAL CHINESE LITERATURE

by Feng Yuan-Chun



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

First Edition 2009

ISBN 978-7-119-05751-4

©Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 2009

Published by

Foreign Languages Press

24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China

<http://www.flp.com.cn>

Distributed by

China International Book Trading Corporation

35 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China

P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China

Printed in the People's Republic of China

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

中国古典文学简史: 英文 / 冯沅君著; 杨宪益, 戴乃迭译.

—北京: 外文出版社, 2009 (学术中国)

ISBN 978-7-119-05751-4

I. 中… II. ①冯…②杨…③戴… III. 古典文学—文学史—中国—英文 IV. I209.2

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2009)第087296号

项目策划: 胡开敏

责任编辑: 杨春燕 李建安

封面设计: 北京维诺传媒文化有限公司

印刷监制: 韩少乙

中国古典文学简史

冯沅君 著

杨宪益 戴乃迭 译

© 2009 外文出版社

出版人: 呼宝民

总编辑: 李振国

出版发行:

外文出版社(中国北京百万庄大街24号)

邮政编码: 100037

网址: <http://www.flp.com.cn>

电话: 008610-68320579 (总编室)

008610-68995852 (发行部)

008610-68327750 (版权部)

制 版: 北京杰瑞腾达科技发展有限公司

印 制: 北京外文印刷厂

开 本: 787mm×1092mm 1/16 印 张: 8.5

2009年8月第1版第1次印刷

(英)

ISBN 978-7-119-05751-4

04800 (精)

10-E-3639S

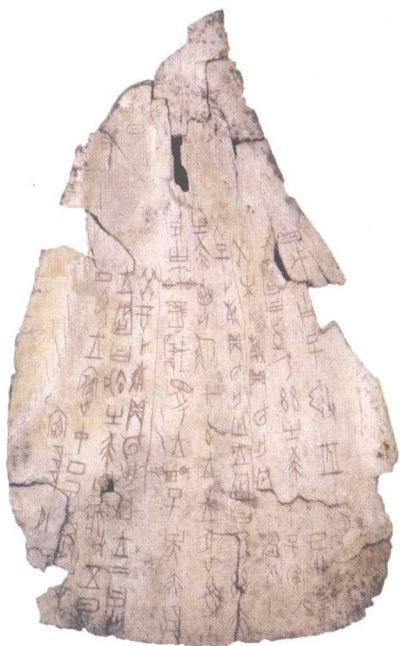
版权所有 侵权必究

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This short history deals with Chinese literature from the earliest days to the May the Fourth Movement of 1919, giving a brief introduction to classical Chinese literature and a general survey of the chief writers and their most important works. The development of Chinese literature since the May the Fourth Movement will be covered in a forthcoming publication, "A Short History of Modern Chinese Literature."

CONTENTS

I. THE ORIGIN OF CHINESE LITERATURE	9
II. CHOU DYNASTY LITERATURE	14
1. Western Chou and Spring and Autumn Period	14
2. Warring States Period	19
III. LITERATURE OF THE CHIN, HAN, WEI AND TSIN DYNASTIES AND SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN DYNASTIES	35
1. Chin and Han Dynasties	35
2. Wei, Tsin and Southern and Northern Dynasties	42
IV. LITERATURE OF THE SUI, TANG, SUNG AND YUAN DYNASTIES	53
1. Sui and Early Tang Dynasties	54
2. Later Tang and Five Dynasties	61
3. Northern Sung Dynasty	68
4. Southern Sung and Golden Tartar Period	75
5. Yuan Dynasty	83
V. LITERATURE OF THE MING AND CHING DYNASTIES	88
1. Early Ming Dynasty	89
2. Later Ming Dynasty	99
3. Ching Dynasty	108
VI. LITERATURE FROM THE OPIUM WAR TO THE MAY THE FOURTH MOVEMENT	117
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF CHINESE DYNASTIES	123
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	124
AUTHORS AND WORKS MENTIONED IN THIS BOOK	125



Oracle bone inscription of the
Shang Dynasty



Writing inscribed on a bronze
vessel of the Chou Dynasty

吳勝

實巧戰戰故學說中行是次轉戰於田八百步為境以二百步歸物中

吳王問孫子曰江馬軍小所晉國之東戰先公戰周成路之

次轉戰故學說中行是次轉戰於田八百步為境以二百步歸物中

吳王問孫子曰江馬軍小所晉國之東戰先公戰周成路之

吳王問孫子曰江馬軍小所晉國之東戰先公戰周成路之

實巧戰戰故學說中行是次轉戰於田八百步為境以二百步歸物中

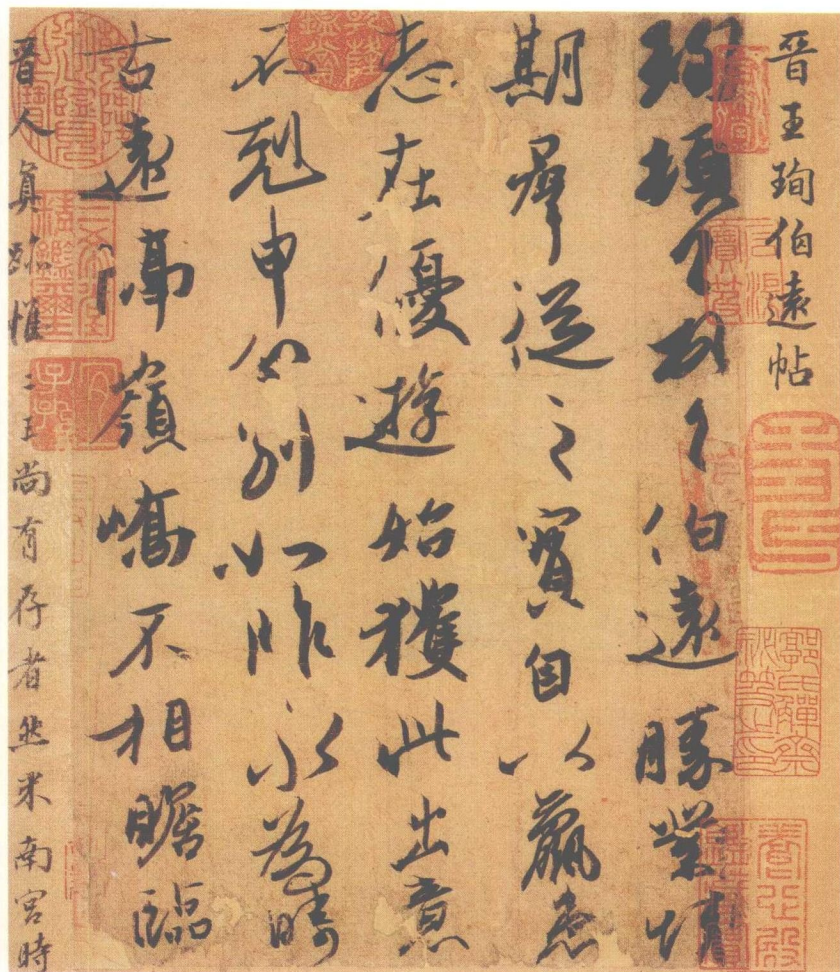
吳王問孫子曰江馬軍小所晉國之東戰先公戰周成路之

實巧戰戰故學說中行是次轉戰於田八百步為境以二百步歸物中

Writing on bamboo strip of the Warring States Period



Mural painting from a Han tomb at Anping



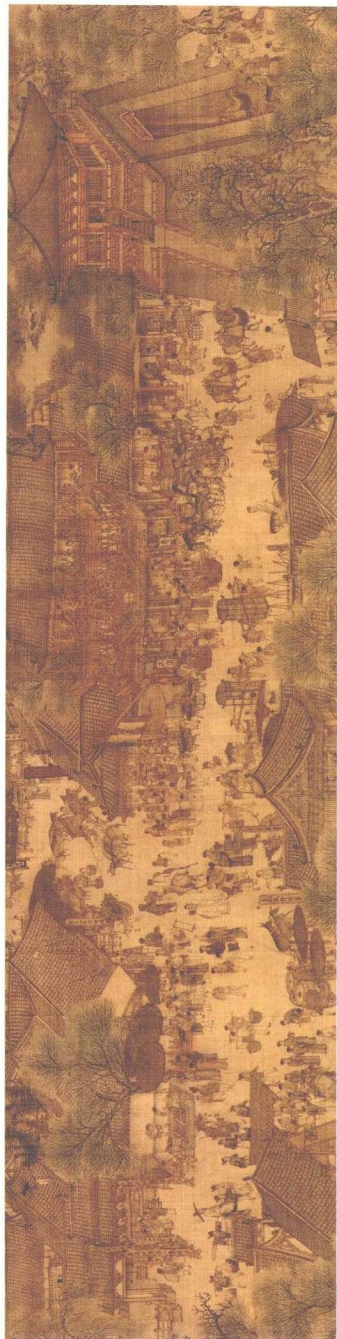
Calligraphy by Wang Hsun of the Tsin Dynasty



Brick of the Northern Dynasties (386-534) showing cavalry



Part of *The Scholars* by Han Huang of the Tang Dynasty



Part of *The Riverside Market on the Spring Festival* by Chang Tse-tuan of the Sung Dynasty



A Feast in the Peach and Plum Orchard One Spring Night by Chou Ying of the Ming Dynasty



An illustration for the novel *Water Margin* by Liu Chun-yu, a woodcut artist of the Ming Dynasty

I. THE ORIGIN OF CHINESE LITERATURE

Literature is the form of art which reflects life through verbal images. An author in his writing inevitably reflects his view of life and the world around him; thus good writing encourages us to advance, while bad writing drags us back. Hence the social significance of literature.

China's long and glorious history boasts many writers who were pioneers in the realm of ideas, and many works which move readers deeply and have a profound educational significance. Some of these have won universal recognition. Indeed, the socialist realist literature of New China is growing out of this outstanding heritage.

It is both rewarding and necessary to look back on the history of this centuries-old literature, for this enables us to understand more clearly the achievements of past writers, the gradual development of China's literary tradition, and the extent to which it was influenced by the life and struggles of the times. This will also help us to see how for thousands of years the Chinese people have fought for a better life, and from the goodly heritage they have left their descendants are drawing sustenance to strengthen them in their work today.

All primitive literature grew out of labour. As Lu Hsun says:

The primitive men who were our ancestors had no language at the start, but to work together, they had

to exchange ideas, and so they gradually learned to make different sounds. If they did not know how to express their weariness when carrying logs, for instance, one of them might cry: "*Ho-yo! Ho-yo!*" and this was a kind of literary creation. If the others approved of it and took it up, the thing was "published." Once such sounds were recorded by means of symbols, you had literature; so the originator was a writer, a man of letters of the "*Ho-yo school*". . . . Even today we can find many folk-songs by illiterate poets and folk stories by illiterate novelists. These are all illiterate authors.

This points out that the earliest authors were the labouring people, who composed the first — unwritten — literature during the course of their work.

To lighten the burden of their toil and express the joy of achievement, the ancient Chinese, like the first men in every country, created rhythmic sounds and language which became the earliest poetry; while, as the centuries went by, labour heightened their perceptive powers and their aesthetic sense developed.

In the early vernacular literature, myths and legends had a special significance.

As the life of primitive men was hard and their knowledge was limited, they had no scientific explanation for natural or social phenomena: heaven and earth, the sun and the moon, mountains and rivers, wind and rain, thunder and lightning, birds, beasts and plants, the origin of human life, the invention of tools, or men's struggle for a happier existence. Instead they tried to understand and explain these things on the basis of their own experience, thus creating many beautiful myths and legends.

The story of the flood is a case in point. This myth is widely known, different versions existing in different parts of China. But the best known of all the heroes alleged to have pacified the flood is Yu the Great.

Yu's father, Kun, undertook the arduous task of curbing the flood. He consulted two wise creatures that lived in the water and constructed dykes to prevent inundations, but the flood only became worse until Heaven grew angry and killed him, and his corpse was left three years without burial. In these three years, however, his body remained unrotted and Yu was born from it to go on with his work. Yu struggled against many monsters and evil spirits who obstructed him; he raised great earthworks to stop the flood's advance and cut channels to let it pass. After toiling for eight years, he finally pacified the flood and enabled the people to live in peace and happiness.

This myth tells of the courage and perseverance of our ancestors in their battle with nature, and how undaunted they were by death and difficulties — when one fell another stepped into his place. Though this myth may strike modern readers as fantastic, it reflects men's determination to build themselves a better life. Stories with a deep significance like this can educate successive generations and become a force to impel society forward. They remain, too, an inspiration for later writers, leaving their mark on the nation's poetry, fiction and drama.

Early Chinese literature was also rich in songs and riddles, but after the lapse of so many centuries the majority of these are lost, while some were so modified when recorded by later scribes that we no longer know their original form.