

Title: Metaphors Ancient Chinese Lived by

Key words: conceptual metaphor; plant; animal; Shih King

The theory of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff&John1980; Lakoff 1993, 2003) proposes that metaphor is a matter of thought rather than language, and ubiquitous in daily communication, but what about ancient Chinese people? What conceptual metaphors did they have in their mind?

This paper aims to explore social life, customs and ideologies in Zhou Dynasty of ancient China (about 1046BC~256BC) from the perspective of metaphors in Shih King (*the Book of Songs*) (Cheng Junying 2006), so as to shed light on the comprehension of Shih King and Chinese culture for non-native speakers of Chinese. Lots of scholars both from China and abroad have made their contributions to the studies of *Shih King* (Zhu XI 1130—1200 AD; William Jennings 2004and James Legge 2007). However none of them has studied the book from cognitive perspective. According to Xie Zheng of Ming dynasty (1368CD-1644CD), Xing (metaphor) is used 370 times and Bi (simile) 110 times in Shih King. Then what are the cultural factors behind these metaphorical expressions? What experiences did they have to form such rich pool of metaphorical expressions? The book was deemed as one of the nine textbooks for ancient Chinese literates and exerted great influence on Chinese language and culture, then what cultural practices are still observed in contemporary China?

Through preliminary research into the first part of Shih King ——Guo Feng, 160 folk songs written by anonymous authors in fifteen regions of Zhou Dynasty, following three conclusions are drawn: 1: Metaphors used in *Book of Songs* could be classified into three categories: PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS and PEOPLE ARE NATURAL PHENOMENA. 2: Agricultural society shaped their thought and language, where plants, animals and natural phenomena were conceptualized as human with different features. 3: Cultural background, politic status and ideologies are closely related to the conceptual metaphors in the book. For example, one basic metaphor in the book is FEMALES ARE VINES, MALES ARE TREES. What has reflected from this metaphor is that the feature of dependency and feebleness of vines has been mapped onto women and strength and independency mapped onto men. The reality behind this metaphor is that Zhou Dynasty was a male-dominant society and females were unable to decide their own fate. 4. Some custom practices are still observed in particular parts of the country now.

This study hopefully will be useful for non-native speakers of Chinese to comprehend Shih King and to get acquaintance with Chinese culture. Results of further study will be reported to ICLC2009.

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