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The 9th Broadyard Workshop

History and Literature in Classical Arabic (I)

June 28-29, 2018

INSTITUTE OF AREA STUDIES PEKING UNIVERSITY

Academic Bulletin

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The Ninth Broadyard Workshop (博雅工作坊), on the theme of "History and Literature in Classical Arabic," was held by the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS); the Department of Arabic Language and Culture of the School of Foreign Languages, PKU; and the Middle East Studies Center of PKU. More than 10 professors and academics from home and abroad participated, as well as teachers and students from PKU's Department of Arabic Language and Culture.

Lin Fengmin, director of the Department of Arabic Language and Culture, hosted the opening ceremony. Dr. Gaafar Karar Ahmed read a speech by Qatar's ambassador to China, Sultan Salmeen Al-Mansouri, in which the ambassador reviewed the history of China-Arab cultural and literary exchanges and expressed his hopes that the workshop would be a great success and that the next workshop would be held at Qatar University.

Qian Chengdan, director of PKUIAS, pointed out in his speech that the holding of the workshop is a sign of the increasingly enhanced exchanges and communication between China and Arabic-speaking countries. He reviewed the reasons for the establishment of PKUIAS, and the activities and events that have been held since it was founded. He expressed his [1]hopes that the activities and events could push forward cultural

and academic communication between China and Arabic-speaking countries.

Prof. Fu Zhiming, deputy director of the School of Foreign Languages, explained in his speech the history of the founding of the School of Foreign Languages and its development and achievements in the academic field. He pointed out that the research of historical documents and an understanding of history are the preconditions for conducting area studies.

Prof. Xue Qingguo, from the Department of Arabic Language and Culture, hosted the first round of academic presentations.

Zhi Puhao, a researcher from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), gave the first presentation, in which he talked about his insights from the depiction of love stories in *The Arabian Nights*. According to Zhi, there are many beautiful and touching love stories in *The Arabian Nights*. The earlier stories primarily feature the love between a prince and a princess using the court as a background; these stories have won the hearts of a great number of readers due to their intricate and mysterious plots. Later, with the rise of the merchant class and the flourishing of civil culture, the stories from the middle and later stages featured the life of merchants, thus attracting readers whose own lives resonated with the plots.

Taking the story of *Masrur and Zayn al-Mawassif* as an example, Zhi highly praised its successful depiction of a love

story of a merchant of those times and said the story had great significance in that the protagonists were able to break through the feudal restrictions that limited them.

Masrur, a young and rich merchant, was an unconstrained romantic who loved to amuse himself. One day, as he was walking past a flower garden, he hears the sounds of musical instruments being played, and, upon careful listening, the plaintive singing from a sorrowful woman reaches his ear. Without realizing it, he finds himself heading into the garden. Upon passing through the gate, he beholds a beautiful woman, who, accompanied by her maids, is playing the zither and singing. The woman is Zayn al-Mawassif. She welcomes Masrur and invites him to play a game of chess with her. In order to please her, he pulls out all his money and gives it to her, and the two of them by turns gradually confess their love for each other. Not long afterward, Zayn's husband, who has been doing business abroad, returns home; and now, for Zayn, life with him becomes something of a hell for her. Subsequently, Masrur and Zayn's husband meet each other for the first time, and the former becomes the latter's business partner. Masrur is able in this way to remain near Zayn.

One day, Zayn's husband invites Masrur to the house for a meal and asks Zayn to join them. Unexpectedly, this is when the passion between the two lovers is discovered by Zayn's husband. In order to protect the reputation of his household, Zayn's

husband decides to take her with him to a far-away land, but Masrur, hearing about it, rushes to follow them. The two lovers contrive to communicate with each other via a trusted servant, who delivers poems the other has written confiding their love for each other. The husband becomes aware of this too; he has a blacksmith make a pair of iron shackles and forces Zayn to put them on in order to torment her further. Pitying her, the blacksmith tells Zayn to find a judge and tell him about her father's mistreatment of her. She finds a judge and recounts how her late father had been in business with a Jewish merchant. Her father on his deathbed left her with fifteen thousand dinars, never thinking that the money would be taken over by that Jew, who then forced her to become his wife, and now was tormenting her. She then asks the judge to make his determination on her behalf. But the judge, seeing that Zayn is as beautiful as a fairy, drools with desire to possess her, and, being wicked in his heart, agrees to adjudicate her case.

In total, Zayn seeks out the help of four different judges but all of them only agree to hear her case out of their selfish intentions. They send officers to arrest her husband and severely beat him, and he is forced to divorce Zayn and return her property. Zayn and her maids then secretly leave on the long road to return to their hometown. The four judges who had fallen in love with her are left empty-handed, and subsequently, one by one all of them pine away and die of illness.

Zayn finally arrives back at her hometown. Masrur, meanwhile, is in the midst of unbearable anxiety for having been separated from his beloved. That day, he walks over to the place Zayn used to live and unexpectedly runs into her there. They kiss and embrace till both swooned away for the stress of their affection and separation. Not long thereafter, the two lovers get married and begin a happy life together. After Zayn's husband is released from prison, he sets out homewards to look for her. As soon as Zayn hears of his coming, she orders that a tomb be dug, and tells her handmaid to go there and pretend that her mistress had died. Her ex-husband goes to the tombside, where he weeps and laments till he falls down in a faint. The handmaid then pushes him into the tomb and buries him alive. Masrur and Zayn then live happily ever after.

In Zhi Puhao's opinion, no matter what the author's intention was, the depiction of the merchants' love is complete and successful. Zayn's betrayal of her husband is reasonable: Her husband took possession of her father's property and forced the then 14-year-old Zayn to be his wife. Her marriage life was like being in a hell. During her husband's absence from home, she meets Masrur and fell in love with him. Their love helps to assuage her traumatized feelings. When she hears of her husband's return, she even says to herself, "If he come hither, our life will be troubled: would to Heaven that I might be spared of him!" She goes so far as to wash her face with saffron in

order to deceive her husband with her pale and sallow face. Deep in her heart, she has already had the thought of leaving her husband for Masrur. When her husband forces her to leave her hometown and wear shackles, she does not surrender to his torture but still tries to keep in touch with Masrur. On one side, she has suffered torture and abuse from her husband; on the other, she uses her wisdom to get the judges to punish her husband; then, she successfully gets rid of the judges. In the society of those days, such agency by a helpless and lonely woman was precious and estimable thing.

In addition, Masrur's devoted and constant love of Zayn as well as Zayn's courage to bravely break through the "fences" in order to pursue freedom and personal happiness is significant examples of rebelling against feudal ethics. More important, the story also showcases a new moral standard in merchants' love. In this respect, feudal ethics, such as "loyalty to husband," and "a virtuous woman will not marry a second time even if her first husband has died," gives place to something more important in life—love.

Zhi said that the story is similar to some novels from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), such as *Jiang Xingge and Wang Sanqiao*. In the story, Sanqiao, the wife of a businessman, Xingge, cheats on him when he is away doing business far from his hometown. Xingge divorces Sanqiao after he finds it out. Afterward, Xingge gets involved in a lawsuit and Sanqiao tries

her best to help him, and they finally get together again. The story does not resort to the traditional preaching of "spilled water cannot be gathered up" (that is, broken love cannot be recovered). Instead, it shows that it is love that functions in affection, a concept that can only appear in a society with a commodity economy that has been developed to a certain level.

Zhi pointed out that *The Arabian Nights* generally considered women as being divided into free women and slave-women. Free women refer to women who own their freedom, such as queens, princesses and wives.

As for slave-women, *The Arabian Nights* is full of compliments, while free women, especially married women, are usually belittled and portrayed as being disloyal and unfaithful to their husbands. Stories like *Masrur and Zayn al-Mawassif* that feature love between a merchant and a married woman without derogatory hints are rare in *The Arabian Nights*. No matter what was the author's intention, Zhi doesn't think Zayn is a role portrayed negatively.

Without any hint of mythology, *Masrur and Zayn al-Mawassif* is one of the stories created relatively late in *The Arabian Nights*, and has relatively strong realistic tendency in that it mirrors society and mostly features the life of townsfolk. The humorous writing not only portrays the wisdom and courage of Zayn but also discloses the ugly faces of the judges and the monks. Such a way of writing resembles that of *The*

Decameron, which means that the later stories in *The Arabian Nights* reached a very high artistic level.

Another aspect worth mentioning is that Zayn switches her faith from Judaism to Islam while her husband is a Jew. In *The Arabian Nights*, except for some short stories that focused on the stories of Jews, all other Jews mentioned in the other stories are mocked and condemned. It must have seemed to the creators of the stories that Judaism was the root of all evils. Shaping the husband's image as a Jew is undoubtedly a compliment to Zayn. Masrur is a Christian but, in order to marry Zayn, he switches his faith to Islam, which is different from many stories in which a female Christian or a female Jew who falls in love with a male Muslim switches her faith to Islam in order to marry him. Such an arrangement in *Masrur and Zayn al-Mawassif* shows that the author intended to shape a positive image of Zayn, which also reflects the changes that happened to the author's mindset.

Zhi Puhao said that his analysis was about the life of Arabian businessmen in medieval times. Although the exact time each story was created cannot be identified, we can see the course of development of Arabian commercial activities based on the lives of merchants reflected in the stories. These stories mirror the colorful and complex personal, love, family and social lives of the merchants. As Karl Heinrich Marx said, at any given stage in human development, the level of production—and the social relations based on that level of production—shape our

limits and possibilities. The merchants' lives mirrored in the stories from *The Arabian Nights* were stamped with the marks of the principles and concepts shaped by medieval Arabian commercial society.

Following Zhi, Prof. Zhang Hongyi from Beijing International Studies University made a report about nostalgia in the poetry from the time of the Islamic conquest.

Zhang explained that she learned that a foreign scholar who studies the history of the time of the Islamic conquest was attending the conference, and in this guest's honor, she would like to share her studies on nostalgia in the poetry from the time of Islamic conquest.

Zhang said that Arab poets who traveled to and then took up residence in the US have a special nostalgia. To escape from wars or social persecution, some Arabian poets moved abroad between late 19th century and middle 20th century. Like some poems written by the famous poet Kahlil Gibran, the works of these Arabian poets usually demonstrate the poets' sorrow at losing their home and leaving their family. But what Zhang focused on at the conference was another group of people. At the beginning of the Islamic era, a large number of armies left their home bases, fighting abroad to expand their territory and preach their religion. During this process they felt a lot of nostalgia that can be traced in some poems such as the following:

Doves in the valley, are you abandoned?/Or did you have to flee due to disasters?

Let us wail bitterly together,/And share the sadness and nostalgia./My dear friends, have you already returned to your hometown?

But I am still stuck in a strange land./I am missing you till I have become heartbroken/If keeping alive from wars is praiseworthy,/Don't blame me for dying of nostalgia./The battlefield is so deserted,/ The falling snow fuels my sadness!/…

The following section of the poem does not seem to be a real poem but rather is almost a list of place names, such as Najd, etc. All in all, the poet was never able to return to his hometown in the rest of his life.

In Zhang's opinion, nostalgia-themed poetry is a wonderful part of the realm of Arabian poetry which carries the deepest human sentiments. When you see an Arabian poet expressing sadness for a broken rock, maybe he was being overwhelmed by nostalgia.

The third speaker was Prof. Isabel Toral-Niehoff from the Free University of Berlin, whose topic was "Concepts of Authorship in Adab Collections: The Case of the *al-Iqd al-Farid*."

The book, which has been compared to a necklace, has 25 volumes, each of which carries the name of a jewel. It contains a wealth of information spanning politics, society, history,

religions, ethics, literature, medical science and music, as well as poetry, anecdotes, proverbs, historical accounts, general knowledge, wise maxims, and even practical philosophy. Part of it comprises translated versions of famous works of literature from Greek, Persian and Indian authors. The majority of the contents in the book are works that have very high literary value, and the book was deemed as a classic of Arab literature, linguistics and poetry that has a great impact on following generations of scholars.

Prof. Toral-Niehoff said that the author, Ibn 'AbdRabbih, seldom addressed his readers directly, making him invisible in the book. Besides writing the opening introduction and several paragraphs elsewhere, the author compiled and translated previously-existing materials that he deemed valuable. There are reasons behind the author choosing this way to compile the book. It is not that the author lacked creativity; instead, it showed the author's modesty and respect for previous scholars. He opined that selecting maxims and opinions to pass on is even harder than writing, and a person's choices mirror his thoughts.

In Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's opinion, he was following in the footsteps of previous scholars. He said that every sage tried their best to summarize the beautiful thoughts of the ancients and chose valuable and wise maxims from people of several generations ago to pass on to the next generation. But, Toral-Niehoff concluded, their summary also needs to be further

summarized and their choices need to be further screened by their followers.

Professor Lin Fengmin from the Department of Arabic Language and Culture gave a speech about Chinese images in *The Arabian Nights*.

According to Lin, the exotic image of an Eastern country shows up in the beginning story of *The Arabian Nights*. "Long ago there lived in the lands of India and China a Sassanid king who commanded great armies and had numerous courtiers, followers, and servants. He left two sons, both renowned for their horsemanship—especially the elder, who inherited the kingdom of his father and governed it with such justice that all his subjects loved him. He was called King Shahriyar. His younger brother was named Shahzaman and was king of Samarkand. The two brothers continued to reign happily in their kingdoms, and after a period of twenty years . . ." Although the story is about a queen's promiscuity and a king who killed innocent women indiscriminately, its depiction of India, China and Persia is full of admiration and appreciation. But with the pushing forward of the storyline, such an attitude gets divided, with the images of China and India being still generally positive in their depiction while the image of Persia became more and more negative.

In *The Arabian Nights*, the hero in the story *Aladdin and the Enchanted Lamp* is the son of a tailor who lives in a big city

in China. The story vividly reflects ancient Arabians' impressions of China's, which is mysterious and beautiful. In the story *Camar al-Zaman and Princess Badoura*, Badoura is a Chinese princess. The images of her, her father and her country are all fascinating.

"…For he had just returned from China, and there he found the Princess Badoura, daughter of the King Ghayur. She was more beautiful than any creature alive on earth…Her father adored her with a passion…Her father heaped her dowry with treasures and built seven castles to house it…"

Lin opined that one of the reasons that the Arabians of those days held a friendly and positive attitude toward China was rooted in their new understanding of China after they failed to conquer China. The Arabians had coveted China but they met with difficulties in moving eastward after conquering Iran, so they had to stop at the border of China. As a result, the Arabians came to believe that China was powerful. In addition, the Arabians got to know the abundant resources of China and its developed economy from both the land and maritime Silk Road; therefore, a positive image of China was gradually formed in their mind.

The speech of Prof. Xue Qingguo from Beijing Foreign Studies University focused on ancient Arabic poetry, Sufism, and Adonis' poetry.

Xue opined that the creation of Adonis' poetry was closely

related to the ancient Arabian cultural heritage, especially ancient Arabian poetry and Sufism, a mystic form of Islam. Since Adonis advocated for the modernization of Arabian poetry, the public tended to hold a bias against him in regard to his attitude on Arabian cultural heritage, deeming that he betrayed Arabian culture. However, after reading his major works, we can find Adonis didn't believe that modernization is simply determined by timeline; rather, ancient literature is likely to be more "modern" than modern literature. Therefore, one should not differentiate ancient and modern literatures by their timeline, and the standard to judge whether a literary work is modern or not should be the attitude of the people of the time. Modernity is a kind of state, which has nothing to do with time. Therefore, heritage and modernity are not definitely contradictory. There are "seeds" of modernity in heritage, which cannot be neglected by us.

In this regard, Adonis was always practicing his theory of heritage during his literary creation, which can be seen from his works such as *Stability and Change*. In poetry creation, Adonis believed that Sufism in Islam paralleled Surrealism in modern literature. Therefore, Adonis' poetry also featured Sufism, which reflected his humanistic concern.

The topic of Gaafar Karar Ahmed's presentation was "The Silk Road in Ancient Arabic Literature."

Gaafar pointed out that the One Belt and One Road

initiative plays a positive and significant role in intensifying the ties between China and the Arab world. Although it is a recent Chinese policy, its foundation had been formed in the history of Sino-Arab relations. From the 8th century to the 15th century, the maritime and land Silk Road connected Chinese and Arabians closely, via which they communicated and exchanged commodities, technology and knowledge. Gaafar opined that there are both economic and cultural ties between China and Arab states. Cultural ties are the foundation for the economic ties between China and Arabic-speaking countries and establishing economic ties cannot happen without a firm cultural ties. The common cultural heritage of China and the Arabic-speaking nations throughout their history will play a proactive and positive role in the construction of the "One Belt and One Road."

The topic of PhD candidate Lin Zhe from the Department of Arabic Language and Culture was the Arab-Islamic social values embodied in *Sīrat Baybars*. She analyzed it from two angles: the social values of the time and the hero's growth process in his early years.

Lin introduced the long history of the emergence and spread of oral legends in the Arab world and the work *Sīrat Baybars*. She analyzed the Arab-Islamic social values embodied in *Sīrat Baybars* while providing some examples and opined that the most worthy aspects of those values were people's fearless

spirit in fighting, generosity, the chivalrous spirit of valuing justice above material gains, honesty, inclusiveness and religious spirit. She thinks that the social values held by legendary figures stem from the social values appreciated and advocated by Arabians as early as in the Jahiliyyah. They parallel the social values advocated in Islamic classics and are also closely related to the instructive function of oral legends.

Lin also posed an important question: Why is there such a big difference between historical documents and oral legends in both the length of story and storyline concerning Baybars' early experience? There is only limited depiction of the hero Baybars' experience of his early years in historical documents; however, as recorded in oral legends, Baybars displays levels of courage, sophistication and devotion when he was young that were all beyond his age. He has rich experiences, such as quirky adventures and heroic achievements, which is different from many works in the world in which the "hero" usually goes through hardships or gets "enlightened" before gradually growing mature and sophisticated. Lin listed several potential reasons behind the phenomenon, such as the legendary characteristics of oral epics, the characteristic for oral epics to be "collectively created", and the acquiescence of the Mamluk rulers of the time.

During the discussion section, Zhi Puhao said researchers should attach much importance to the massive corpus of ancient

Arabic literature and classics. He said that many of the classics have been translated into Chinese, but the study on them is overdue. Both translation work and study should be strengthened in order to push forward the studies on ancient Arabic literature and classics.

Prof. Ge Tieying from the University of International Business and Economics made a speech titled "The Commercial Press and the Translation of Ancient Arabic Classics."

According to Ge, The Commercial Press has been engaged in the editing and publishing of books in the Arabic-Islamic culture field since the early 20th century. In 1906, *The Arabian Nights* was translated in Chinese by Na Xun and published. It was the first time that *The Arabian Nights* had been translated directly from Arabic to Chinese. Afterward, a series of books about Islamic culture were published, which were followed by a series of books about the Near East and Arabic history and culture. In addition, several Arabic-Chinese and Chinese-Arabic dictionaries were also published by The Commercial Press.

As for the translation of ancient Arabic books, Ge said that the translation of the *Qur'ān* marked the beginning of the translation of ancient Arabic books in China. The translation of selected parts from the *Qur'ān* dates back to the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, and a complete translation of the *Qur'ān* was published in 1927. In following years, the translation of Ahadith books saw a boom with completion of the translations

of all six authentic collections of Ahadith (which are referred to in Arabic as "Al-Kutub Al-Sittah," translated as "The Authentic Six,"). Among them, *Sahih Bukhari* was the version that had the most Chinese translations. Besides the religious classics, ancient Arabic books in other fields were also gradually translated into Chinese, among which *Suleiman's Journey to the East* translated by Liu Bannong and Liu Xiaohui had very high academic value. The book was translated from the French edition and Japanese edition of *Travel Notes of China and India*, one of the earliest books compiling travel notes on China and India written by medieval Arabians. From 1959 to 2015, Chinese publishing houses, including People's Literature Publishing House, Qinghai People's Publishing House and Hunan Literature and Art Publishing House, published more than a dozen Chinese editions of Arabic books, including *Kalila and Dimna*, *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, and *Muruj al-dhahab*.

Ge said that the ancient Arabic books that have been translated are mainly about Arab history, literature, philosophy and geography, while those about religion and language are relatively few. He opined that Chinese academics should communicate and discuss more on translation strategy and how to select ancient books to translate.

Dr. Pan Xiaohan, from the Department of Arabic Language and Culture, presented his report under the title "Scales for the Implementation of Grammatical Rules—Writings on Grammar

in *Alfiyyahibn Malik*."

Pan pointed out that *'asl, far', 'illah*and*hakm* are four factors that comprise a *qiyas* procedure (deductive analogy), and while grammatical rules on the position of *'asl* differ from those on the position of *far'*, the two groups of rules differ in their enforcement of execution. According to the base, Ibn Malik in his *Alfiyyah* divides the grammatical rules into three different executive scales, i.e., prescriptive scale, objective scale and preferential scale, and the rules under the prescriptive scales are similarly divided into *'asliyyah* (original) rules, *mamnu'ah* (forbidden) rules and *far'iyyah* (branched) rules. This classification actually could be traced back to the four criteria Sibawayhi once made to describe speech according to its grammaticality and meaning: they are good (right word order), ugly (bad word order), correct (meaning clear), and wrong (meaningless). The first two criteria are related to grammaticality and the latter two are related to the meaning. Finally, Pan indicated that the development of *nahw* (classic Arabic grammar) from Sibawayhi to Ibn Malik reflects two basic trends that happened to writings on Arabic grammar: one was a transition from being descriptive to being prescriptive; another was a transition from being *kalamiyyah* (theological) to being *fiqhiyyah* (jurisprudential).

The topic of Dr. Yoones Dehghani Farsani, from the Department of Arabic Language and Culture, was "Muslim

Identity as Reflected in the *Futūḥal Shām* Ascribed to al-Wāqidī (d. 823 AD)."

The author of *Futūḥ al-Shām* was a judge in Bagdad who was proficient in history, Ahadith and law. The book chronicles Arab's conquest of Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Iran, with the conquest of Syria comprising the major part. Dr. Yoones selected some passages about the conquest of Syria from the book and analyzed the description of the "self" (Muslims) and "others" (Byzantines) as two religious communities from three levels of narration: extradiegetic, intradiegetic and metadiegetic.

He opined that the application of non-religious terms/expressions in Muslims' self-depictions at the three levels decreases, while in their depiction about Byzantines there are depreciative descriptions and the religion-based descriptions at the three levels decreases. At the same time, there are more neutral depictions of Byzantines in the framework of narration than in the narration world. In the expressions by Byzantines about Byzantines, religion is a key element in self-definition, while in the expressions by Byzantines about Muslims, they have a depreciative description of Muslims. But different from what Muslims used for Byzantines, Byzantines have neither used depreciative expressions in terms of religion about Muslims nor used religion-oriented elements in the expressions about Muslim identity.

He pointed out that different levels of the narration draw a

different portrayal of the identity of both Arab Muslims and Byzantines. In the framework narration (extradiegetic), religion has not been a key element in depicting both sides. In addition, Muslims depict themselves and Byzantines with emphasis on the element of religion, while Byzantines portray Muslims with emphasis on the element of ethnicity and tribe.

During the discussion section, Gaafar emphasized the importance of the translation of ancient Arabic books. He said that it is beneficial to the communication between Chinese and Arabians and enhances mutual friendship. He thinks that the translation of ancient books has entered a new era and that young scholars have the ability and responsibility to continue the work of their predecessors.

Xue Guoqing said that, to date, the translated Arabian books have been mainly in the fields of history, geography, medicine, literature, philosophy and agriculture, while books about poetry have only seen limited translation. There were very few translated collections of the poetry of certain poets. He also believes that only translating some selected poems or translating some sections of poems are far from enough. And currently there are neither translations of Ibn Rushd's philosophical works nor people who try translating literary works about Sufism. There are many areas in which it is worthwhile to dig deeper, which will benefit Chinese people's understanding of Arab countries.

During the fourth and fifth segments of the conference, held on the morning of June 29, post-doctorate Ju Shuwen, from Shanghai International Studies University, made a speech titled "The Linguistic Sources and Sībawayhi's Intention in his *Kitāb*."

Ju first introduced Sībawayhi's life and background. He was born in Persia; his father was a Muslim convert. Sībawayhi arrived in Basra when he was young originally intending to study Islamic law. But after he was publicly corrected for a mistake he made in reciting a hadith, he decided to study grammar instead. There was a famous incident linked to his departure from Basra and return to his birth country, where he died soon after. The incident concerned his debate on a grammatical question raised by another famous grammarian, al-Kisā'ī.

Al-Kisā'ī brought in some Bedouins who, some sources describe, had been bribed by al-Kisā'ī beforehand. They supported al-Kisā'ī, and this humiliation caused Sībawayhi to leave for his native Persia, whence he never returned. Depressed, he eventually died.

Ju said that the selected linguistic sources (which are called "*samaa'*" in Arabic grammatical tradition) in the *Kitāb* fall under four major categories: the *Qur'ān*, poetry, the speech of the Bedouins and the prophetic traditions.

The speech of the Arabs usually includes proverbs and

speech patterns. And the prophetic traditions are quoted by Sībawayhi in the *Kitāb* only a few times, probably due to the fact that the transmission of hadith was not always faithful to its actual form, which reduced the authority of this kind of linguistic sources.

The *Kitāb* has 574 chapters, which can be seen as 574 questions or topics regarding different orientations to study linguistics. After a general introduction of seven chapters, Sībawayhi first deals with syntactic questions; then there is a long section on all kinds of processes that have to do with derivational morphology; finally, phonological processes are treated that determine the actual surface form of the word. Such an order was followed by later scholars.

Ju also said Sībawayhi set criteria for evaluating sentences, with achieving semantic success coming first. Based on semantic success, the sentences can be further evaluated by their structural correctness or incorrectness. In doing so, Sībawayhi tactfully solves the problem of ranking poetic materials. As long as the poet's meaning is conveyed, the syntactical irregularities of the poetry can be regarded as a secondary issue.

Ju pointed out that the intention of Sībawayhi in composing his book has three aspects: first, to describe the structure of Arabic; second, to define the grammatical meanings in the speech of the pure Arabic-speaking Bedouins; third, to show the perfection of the Arabic language.

Ju opined that later scholars confined their study of Arabic linguistics to codifying grammatical rules rather than coping with linguistic sources like poetry and the speech of the Arabs. By the time of 12th century, Ibn Maḍā', an Andalusian grammarian and also the grand justice at the time, attacked harshly in his "ar-Radd ʿalā an-nuḥāt" on the complexity of grammar brought by Mashriqi grammarians, who had caused the study of language to be part of the rules of logic and argumentation.

Hence, there must have been a remarkable degeneration of Sībawayhi's methods, especially the semantic aspects of grammatical study. Even in the present day, there are still complaints, like "Down with Sībawayhi", which made Sībawayhi a scapegoat of later grammarians.

Ju opined that the question of whether we should praise Sībawayhi or denigrate him deserves further consideration.

Dr. Alaa Mamdouh Akef (Gao Shan), from Beijing Language and Culture University, made a speech on "The Translation Difficulty and Strategy of Ancient Arabic Books." He began by mentioning that Yahya Mukhtar had written in his PhD dissertation that there are more than 300 literary works that have been translated from Arabic to Chinese, among which 34 are ancient Arabic literary works, including the *Qur'ān*, *Hadith*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Kalila and Dimna*, etc. As for research on ancient Arabic literary works, taking *The Arabian Nights* for

example, there have been a total of 287 works about in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, 14 of which focus on the translation of the book.

Gao Shan also pointed out the problems and difficulties in translating ancient Arab literature works. First, there is a shortage of dictionaries about ancient Arabic and Chinese. Second, ancient Arabic is very difficult is difficult to translate, especially proper nouns (people's names, names of places) and specific terms. The third is the problem of the development of ancient Arabic. He took the animal camel as an example, saying that there are specific words for almost every part of a camel's body and for some of them, there are no counterpart translations in other foreign languages, which brings many difficulties in translation work. In addition, some words in ancient Arabic proverbs and poems have exclusive cultural or historical background. If the translators have no idea of the ancient Arab tribes, legends, or historical events, it is hard for them to translate those words correctly.

To address the problems and difficulties mentioned earlier, Gao Shan proposed three suggestions. First, taking advantage of electronic dictionaries online, such as lisaan.net and the Arabic-English dictionary compiled by Edward Lane. Second, using the Arabic corpus and lexicons, such as the Qur'ān corpus at the University of Leeds. Third, making use of the websites of organizations in the world that are engaged in the study of

ancient Arab literature and its translations, such as the website of the Arabic department of Stanford University, which provides dictionaries, Arabic grammars and encyclopedia, etc.

He added that help from more auxiliary systems is needed in the translation of ancient Arabic literature. That is, translation criticism studies need to be launched to push forward translation work. Translators of ancient Arabic literature can concentrate on translating books of a certain period in order to better understand the language of this period. At the same time, artificial intelligence can be applied to reduce mistakes. Translation work nowadays should not be confined to professional translators; talent from other fields can also set foot in this field.

Yuan Lin, from the Department of Arabic Language and Culture, gave a speech on "Ibadi's History Writing and Identity-Recognition Construction."

Yuan first gave a brief introduction of Ibadi. Ibadi, a school of Islam in Oman, is viewed as a branch of the Khawarij. Statistics shows that 70 percent of the population in Oman is Ibadi, and it is also found in parts of Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Zanzibar.

Yuan pointed out that the Ibadi denomination formed and then strengthened their collective memory through historical writing, and then constructed their identity-recognition and social system. Ibadi historical writing mainly dealt with

dogmatics, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), tribal genealogy and biographical notes, the most important of which include the *Biography and Biographical Notes on Imam* written by Yaḥyá ibn Abī Bakr Abū Zakariyaʾ al-Warjalānī and *Tabaqat al Mashayekh* written by Abu Abbas Ahmed al-Darjīnī.

Yuan analyzed how scholars of the Ibadi denomination constructed the identity-recognition through historical writing from four aspects—the naming of the Ibadi denomination, its founders, *ahadith* and Imam system. She said that the school derives its name from ʿAbdu l-LāhibnIbāḍ. However, "Ibadi" was what non-Ibadi Muslims called them; in contrast, the Ibadi believed that recognition of their denomination is attributed to their "ideology," not to a certain leader or Imam, and therefore they call themselves "al-Muhakimah."

J. C. Wilkinson, emeritus professor from the University of Oxford, has opined that Sunni historians divided Khawāridj into three parts, among which only the leader of al-Azariqah, al-Azraq, is a real person, while the leaders of Ibadi and Ṣufris are fictional figures. However, the Ibadi believed the founder of their denomination is Jabir ibn Zayd. Wilkinson has pointed out that neither Abdu l-Lāhibn Ibāḍ nor Jabir ibn Zayd was the real founder of the Ibadi; the Ibadi denomination was actually co-founded by religious scholars. They constructed the common memory of Jabir ibn Zayd as their denomination's founder through historical writings because Jabir was a close friend of

prophet Muhammad's cousin Abdullah, and also the narrator of Hadith. He can be said to be the person closest to the prophet, namely the person closest to truth. The Ibadi denomination revered the *Al-Jami' Al-Sahih* compiled by Imam Ar-Rabee' ibn Habib. The scholars of the school believed that the four phases experienced by the Ibadi movement were the emergence period, the defense period, the sacrifice period and the concealment period. Through the compiling of the Ibadi-version Hadith and the theoretical construction of a system of Imam, scholars of the school further constructed a common standard of conduct and political system for the denomination.

Yuan pointed out that the Ibadi denomination was not founded based on affinity, and the ties between the members were not inborn but formed afterward. Through historical writing, scholars of the Ibadi denomination helped to form a collective memory and establish a group identification, which was an essential element for the emergence and continuance of the Ibadi denomination.

Prof. Lu Peiyong, from Shanghai International Studies University, gave a speech about social values and national views in *The Arabian Nights*.

Lu said that *The Arabian Nights* is a special classic work. Based on Arab-Islamic civilization, it vividly reflects all walks of life of medieval Arab society and presents the basic value system of traditional Arab society that contains the view on

power, life, and fortune as well as a sense of national identity and sense of cultural belongingness.

Lu pointed out that in the medieval Arab world, the regime headed by a khalifah, characterized by centralization of authority, exercised authoritarian rule. Different from the Shura system established in the era of prophet Muhammad, a khalifah was the supreme ruler that determined everything; therefore, a political system that centered on power was gradually formed. With this background, *The Arabian Nights* mentions rulers of the ancient Islamic world multiple times, such as khalifah, sulṭān, and king, among which more than ten people were referred to as "khalifah." Although most of the stories of khalifah were fictional, some were based on real history. In *The Arabian Nights*, some khalifah—for example Umar bin Abdul Aziz, Harunal-Rashid, or Abdullāh al-Maʾmūn—were described as being fair, intelligent and merciful, which mirrored the eager appeal for realizing social fairness of people at the grass-roots.

In *The Arabian Nights*, it was believed that a correct view of life is the foundation for people to lead a happy life, and it will neither curb people's affections or lust in their inner heart nor be affected by the changes of time and space; only the laws made by Allah could supersede it. The view on life reflected by *The Arabian Nights* is demonstrated from three aspects—insisting on the concept of *tauheed*, pursuing happiness in both the present life and in the afterlife, and

practicing good behaviors, including maintaining athirst for knowledge, being diligent and benevolent, which are also basic principles advocated by Islam.

The view on fortune conveyed by *The Arabian Nights* is closely related to the booming economy of the medieval Arab cities. With the lifestyle of Arabs being transformed from nomadic life to city life, their society changed dramatically. The dissemination and development of Islam also changed previous conventions, people's thoughts and behaviors, and led to a view on fortune based on honesty and trustworthiness. Many tales in *The Arabian Nights* delivered such a view on fortune.

Lu further pointed out that the Arab's common history and cultural heritage led them to insisting on a self-recognition related to their national identity, which has lasted till today. Many tales in *The Arabian Nights* stem from stories in the history of the Arab nation, some of which aimed to laud the achievements of the khalifah. But no matter whether belongingness in *The Arabian Nights* is on the nation level or cultural level, it is deeply rooted in the "core value" of medieval Arab society, which is Arab-Islamic civilization.

Dr. Albadawe Abdalla Albadawi, a Sudanese student who studies at Tsinghua University, gave a speech about how to decode Arabic literature, taking the *Risālat al-Ghufrān*written by Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrīas an example.

Albadawi said that *Risālat al-Ghufrān* is the representative

work of Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, a famous poet during the Abbasid era. In this book, Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī bravely unfolded his imagination, writing that he went to heaven and met ancient poets who had lived in al-Jahiliyyah, such as Zuhayr bin Abī Sūlmā. He is astonished because, according to tradition, they could not go to the heaven. Zuhayr bin Abī Sūlmā explained to him that he could be in the heaven because he was an honest person when he was alive, and he received the forgiveness of Allah once in his dream. Getting to know the reason from Zuhayr, Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī came up with the central thought of his book—"forgiveness." In the later part of the book, Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī portrays a scene in which he attends a feast with the poets, and they chat happily in the heaven.

Albadawi said that Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī was blind when he was young and went through a lot of hardships during his life. However, he was well-known to the world for his erudite knowledge and unique philosophic thoughts. He severely satirized and criticized the religious creeds and social conventions prevailing in society at that time, appealed for rationality, protested superstition, and was deemed a great poet and thinker.

The title of the presentation by Qian Ailin, assistant professor at Southern University of Science and Technology, was "Ibn Khaldūn and the *City of Brass*."

Qian Ailin first explained that Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406), while speaking of the general layout of his *Kitāb al-ʿibar*, pointed out that his *Muqaddimah* "deals with the great merit of historiography, offers an appreciation of its various methods, and cites historians' errors." She also introduced his collecting and reorganizing of historical materials and his regulating of principles in compiling historical works.

Qian Ailin pointed out that many historical books, fables and folktales in medieval times aimed to loosely serve as lesson, warning or example for rulers through telling historical stories or animal fables in order to teach them how to rule and avoid bad examples of governance.

She listed four places mentioned in *The Arabian Nights* that were about the City of Iram, as well as the chronicling of the City of Brass and its builders in a story titled *The Brass Bottles and the City of Bra*ss. In the latter story, the discovery of the City of Brass can also find a precedent in the *Muruj al-dhahab*. Ibn Khaldūn showed his strong doubts over the authenticity of the story, saying "it is clearly absurd." Although Ibn Khaldūn usually warned history writers to be careful in analyzing and selecting both oral and written historical materials, the famous historian of Arab history Philip Khuri Hitti still attached an anecdote in *The Arabian Nights* in his *History of the Arabs*. As a historian, Hitti knew well that anecdotes appeal to readers, just as a narrator likes to use legends to attract his listeners.

The title of PhD candidate Bai Ye, from the Department of Arabic Language and Culture, was "A Brief Comment on the Relationship between Dhu al-Qarnayn and Alexander the Great in Medieval Arab Historical Books."

He began his talk with an account of the chronicling of Dhu al-Qarnayn in the *Qur'ān* and the chronicling of Alexander the Great's identity and stories in medieval Arab history books, and then analyzed the different views in different historical materials about whether Dhu al-Qarnayn and Alexander the Great were in fact the same person. He also gave his conclusions as to the possible reasons why some compilers of historical material believed they were the same person.

He opined that Dhu al-Qarnayn was commonly believed to be Alexander the Great in medieval historical and religious books possibly because medieval Arab scholars were influenced by the Persian mythological system when they were compiling history. In medieval Arab historical books, Arab tradition is not contradictory to Persian tradition; instead, the two traditions supplement and promote each other. The overlap of the identities of Dhu al-Qarnayn and Alexander the Great maybe just an artifact of the mirrored integration of the two traditions.

During the following discussion, attendees spoke highly of Qian Ailin and Bai Ye's speeches and explored the historic and cultural information they had presented. An Egyptian student studying at Beijing Language and Culture University mentioned

the record of Dhu al-Qarnayn in Jewish and other religious books, and expressed his opinion regarding Bai Ye's research on the chronicling of Alexander the Great in Arabian history.

Albadawi expressed his belief that the study is not only related to the field of literature but also to the field of philosophy. He also mentioned the place of Yajuj and Majuj in history.

Gao Shan commented that the historical books cited by Bai Ye are very important ones in Arab history in that they collect a lot of historical facts. But some of the exotic terms or names are not familiar in the Arab culture context. In addition, the *Qur'ān* coming to earth is for enlightenment, and should not be relied upon to ascertain historic facts.

The closing ceremony of the conference was emceed by Lian Chaoqun, Assistant Professor in the Department of Arabic Language and Culture. Dr. Yoones summarized the themes and main ideas of the speeches from the attendees, categorizing them based on their different study areas.

Prof. Lin Fengmin showed his appreciation to all the participants at the conference in his speech at the closing ceremony, saying that it was due to their efforts that the workshop provided a wealth of academic knowledge. He expressed his hope that the academic reports at the conference would be collected for publication, and that the best ones would be included in the journal *Middle East Studies of PKU*.