Glossing strategies in the *Shìmíng* 釋名

Françoise Bottéro
CRLAO EHESS CNRS
Paris, France

In the present paper I will focuss on the *Shìmíng* 釋名 not from a phonological point of view, like Bodman 1954, but from the perspective of the history of Chinese dictionaries. As the first systematic work using the *shēng xùn* 聲訓 method to explain words, the *Shìmíng* belongs to the beginning of Chinese dictionaries that can be traced back to the Hàn dynasty. I will present here the different types of definitions and the specific terms used by Liú Xī in his glosses. And I will show that Liú Xī's importance for the study of Chinese autochtonous linguistics should not simply be linked to his "etymological" approach, but also to his proper concern with words rather than characters as opposed to authors of other "dictionaries" of the Hàn dynasty.

1. Presentation of the *Shìmíng*

The *Shìmíng* 釋名 'Explaining names' was written in 200 AD by Liú Xī 劉熙,[1] and was meant to provide the so-called 'etymology' for about 1500 words. It is based on a semantic classification divided into 27 sections. With more or less identical titles, most sections recall that of the *Ěryǎ* 爾雅: 1 釋天 'explaining heaven', 2 釋地 'explaining earth', 3 釋山 'explaining mountains', 4 釋水 'explaining rivers', 5 釋丘 'explaining hills', 11 釋親屬 'explaining kinship', 17 釋宮室 'explaining palaces', 21 釋用器 'explaining tools', 22 釋

---

[1] It is not known when Liú Xī was exactly born and died, but he lived during the Eastern Hàn dynasty and was a native of Běi hài 北海 (modern Shāndōng province). He is also known as the author of a commentary on Mèngzǐ 孟子 which was lost but quoted in Huìlín's 釋慧琳 (737- 820) *Yīqièjīng yīnyì* 一切經音義. For more information on Liú Xī and his authorship see Hú Pǔ'ān 胡樸安, *Zhōngguó xùngǔxué shǐ* 中國訓詁學史 [History of ancient chinese philology], Shànghǎi: Shāngwù yìnshūguǎn, (1939) 1984: 184-87; Bodman, Nicholas Cleaveland, *A Linguistic Study of the Shih Ming: Initials and Consonant Clusters*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954: 1, 3-5; Miller, Roy Andrew, "Shih ming" in Michael Loewe (ed.), *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, 1993, 424-428; Wèi Yǔwén 魏于文 "*Shìmíng* yánjiū zōngshù"《釋名》研究综述 [Comprehensive Summary on *Shiming*]. *Jiāyīng dàxué xuébào* (*Zhéxué shèhuì kēxué bǎn*) 嘉應大學學報(哲 學社會科學) *Journal of Jiaying University* 2000: 18-5, p. 82-87; Yáng Guāngróng 楊光榮, *Cíyuán guānniàn shǐ* 詞源觀念史 [The history of the notion of etymology], Chéngdū: Sìchuān chūbǎnshè, 2008: 339 sq; Lǐ Dōnggē 李冬鴿, *Shìmíng xīnzhèng* 釋名新證 [New approach of the Shiming], Shànghǎi gǔjí chūbǎnshè 2014.

樂器 'explaining musical instruments',[2] but there are also some innovative sections such as: 8 釋形體 'explaining shapes and bodies', 9 釋姿容 'explaining appearances', 10 釋長幼 'explaining seniority', 12 釋言語 'explaining expressions', 19 釋書契 'explaining written documents', 20 釋典藝 'explaining Classics and Arts'. Liú Xī might have been influenced by the thematic organisation of the *Jíjiù piān* 急就篇 composed by Shǐ Yóu 史游, around 49 to 33 BC, to help "students" learn a more or less basic written vocabulary. In the *Jíjiù piān* words were arranged upon a thematic ordering, starting with proper names, cloths, colours, food, clothes, body parts, weapons, buildings, trees, animals..., down to illness and funeral rites. On the other hand, the 12th section of the *Shìmíng*: *Shì yányǔ* 釋言語 'explaining expressions', which introduces cultural and ethical notions such as *dào* 道 'way', *dé* 德 'virtue', *wén* 文 'culture', *wǔ* 武 'military', *rén* 仁 'benevolence', *yì* 誼 (義) 'justice', *lǐ* 禮 'etiquette', *xìn* 信 'trust', *xiào* 孝 'filial devotion', *cí* 慈 'compassion', *yǒu* 友 'friendship', *gōng* 恭 'respectful attitude', *tì* 悌 'respect for older brother', etc., recalls somehow the list of moral terms for which Jiǎ Yì 賈誼 (200-168) provided definitions and antonyms in his *Xīn Shū* 新書, ch. 8 "*Dào Shù*" 道術.[3] But Liú Xī also includes terms related to speech, inscriptions, explanation, etc., 言、語、銘、 說, before listing different kinds of actions (moving, returning, following, making noise), as well as states (be respectuous, be silent, etc.) closer to the 2nd section 釋言 of the *Ěryǎ*.

The *Shìmíng* begins with 'Heaven' 天 and 'Earth' 地, but does not include any proper section for 'man' (人).[4] It nevertheless deals with human affairs and all sorts of things denominated or created by men from mountains, roads, regions, food, language, kinship terms to funeral rules. It is interesting to note that there is no section on plants or animals, which altogether correspond to the last seven sections of the *Ěryǎ*.[5]

In the *Shìmíng*, Liú Xī intends to show the motivation at the basis of word creation, or, in other terms, the reason why words are pronounced the way they are. He writes in his preface:

夫名之於實各有義類,百姓日稱而不知其所以之意. 故撰天地陰陽四時邦國都鄙車服喪紀下及民庶應用之器論敘指歸謂之釋名.凡二十七篇.

---

2   Compare with *Ěryǎ*: 4 釋親, 5 釋宮, 6釋器, 7釋樂, 8 釋天, 9 釋地, 10 釋丘, 11釋山, 12 釋水.

3   See Harbsmeier, Christoph, *Language and Logic. Science and Civilisation in China* Vol 7, part 1. Cambridge University Press, 1998: 60.

4   Like, for example, the *Shuōwén jiězì* 說文解字 (100 AD) which presents the *sāncái* 三才 'Three powers' (天, 地, 人) in an original way, since it gathers terms related to 'Heaven' in the 1st chapter, terms related to 'man' in the 8th, and terms related to 'earth' at the end of the 13th chapter (Xú Xuàn 徐鉉 *Shuōwén jiězì* 說文解字, Běijīng: Zhōnghuá shūjú, 1988). Note that Liú Xī begins his chapter 8 釋形體 with man followed by a quotation of the *Yìjīng*: 人, 仁也；仁生物也. 故《易》曰"立人之道, 曰仁與義" "*Rén* 'man is (paronomastically) associated with *rén* 'benevolence. Benevolence engenders things, thus it is said in the *Yìjīng*: to establish the way of man is called benevolence and justice."

5   Significantly the wolf is only mentioned in 27.20 (掠, 狼也 "Thief is (paronomastically) associated with wolf ") and the term is never discussed; horse, cow, pig, rabbit, chicken, birds, worms, deer, sheep, pheasant are often quoted, but we can only find a paronomastic gloss for sheep and 'pheasant' (24.8: 羊, 祥也 'sheep is (paronomastically) associated with auspicious'); 15.6 鷩, 憋也 ("Pheasant is (paronomastically) associated with suffocate"); see Rèn Jìfǎng 任继昉, *Shìmíng huì jiào* 釋名汇校, Jǐnán: Qí Lǔ shūshè, 2006: 468 and 239.

"As for names in their relation to realities, each of them belongs to a semantic category. The common people apply them everyday, but are unaware of the underlying thought that makes them so. Thus I have compiled a work on Heaven, Earth, *yīn*, *yáng*, four seasons, states, capitals, countryside, chariots and robes, accounts of funeral arrangements, down to the instruments of common use among the people, and classified them in their proper order. I have named it "Explaining names". In all there are 27 sections."

The originality of Liú Xī's approach is the general use of phonetic glosses (*shēng xùn* 聲訓) to explain the meaning of words. The phonetic gloss method consists in choosing a more or less homophonous word with the entry to provide a semantic link between them.[6] Except in rare cases, such supposed motivations at the basis of words have nothing to do with 'historical etymology' (Miller 1993: 426), but correspond rather to folk etymology. Since a parallel is usually drawn in western rhetoric with paronomasia, phonetic glosses are often translated as 'paronomastic glosses', but also as 'word play', 'punning glosses' or 'puns'. Bodman has chosen "sound glosses" to translate the term *yīn xùn* 音訓 equivalent to *shēng xùn* as noted by Zhōu Zǔmó 周祖謨.[7]

The *shēng xùn* method already existed in pre-Qín literature.[8] When asked about government, Confucius replied: "Government consists in correcting" 政者正也 (*Lúnyǔ,* Yán Yuān 顏淵 12·17).[9] The *Mèngzi* provides more examples: 庠者 養也; 校者 教也；序者 射 也 "*xiáng* 'school' consists in *yǎng* 'rearing', *xiào* 'school' consists in *jiào* 'teaching', *xù* 'school' consists in (teaching) 'archery' *shè*." (Téng wén gōng shàng 滕文公上) *Mèngzi zhèngyì* 孟子正義 (1996: 343). Xǔ Shèn makes also use of paronomasia in his *Shuōwén jiězì*: 天 顚也 "*Tiān* 'sky' is (paronomastically evocative of) *diān* 'forehead, i.e. top'" (SW 1A 1a); 帝諦也 "*dì* (act as a) sovereign is (paronomastically evocative of) *dì* 'to examine'" (SW 1A 1b).

Liú Xī's work gathers many glosses from ancient texts and commentators: *Máo zhuàn* 毛傳, *Yìjīng* 易經, *Lǐjì* 禮記, *Guǎnzi* 管子, *Shǐjì* 史记, *Báihǔ tōng* 白虎通, *Hànshū* 漢書, *Wěishū* 緯書, *Ěryǎ* 爾雅, *Cāngjié piān* 蒼頡篇, *Shuōwén jiězì* 說文解字, *Fēngsú tōngyì* 風俗通義, Zhèng Xuán 鄭玄, Gāo Yòu 高诱, etc.[10] It is nevertheless an original piece of work that differs significantly from any other known anterior lexicographic work since Liú Xī has generalised the *shēng xùn* method and applied it systematically to most entries.

---

6   In French we would say for example: "Qui se ressemble s'assemble" in which 'se ressembler' implies 's'assembler'.

7   See under the entry *Shìmíng, Zhōngguó dàbǎikè quánshū (Yǔyán wénzì)* 中國大百科全書 (語言文字). Běijīng, Shànghǎi 1988: 361.

8   Wáng Lì 王力, *Zhōngguó yǔyán xuéshǐ* 中國語言學史 [History of Chinese Linguistics], Táiběi: Gǔfēng 谷風, 1987: 43.

9   Yáng Bójùn 楊伯峻, *Lúnyǔ yìzhù* 論語譯註, Běijīng: Zhōnghuá shūjú, 1980: 129. In this example the relationship between the two terms might correspond to real etymology. But this is not always the case. Note that Liú Xī reproduces this gloss in his chapter 12: 政正也下所取正也 (12. 95) "Government consists in correcting; it is where the people below obtain what is correct".

10 See Wú Chuí 吳錘, *Shìmíng shēng xùn yánjiū* 釋名聲訓研究 [The study of paronomastic glosses in Shiming], Běijīng: Mínzú 民族, 2010: 36 sq; Guō Wénchāo 郭文超, *Liú Xī Shìmíng xùngǔ yánjiū* 劉熙"釋名"訓詁研究 [Study of commentaries in Liú Xī's Shìmíng], *Shuòshì wèi lùnwén* 碩士位論文 "Master dissertation, Húnán Shīfàn dàxué [Hunan Normal University], 2001: 21-28.

2. The different types of glosses in the *Shìming*

A close study of the text shows the use of various strategies and terms to explain the supposed semantico-phonetic links between words in the *Shìmíng*. If the main formula corresponds to A B 也, we can nevertheless distinguish three types of glosses: lexical, encyclopaedic and various types of non-semantically motivated glosses. [11] I shall first give examples of these general types, as well as their sub-types, before presenting the basic terminology for the glosses and for pronunciations provided by Liú Xī.

As will be noticed, the translations are not always as clear as one would like them to be, since the logic at the basis of Liú Xī's glosses is not easy to grasp or may be lost.

2. 1. Lexical glosses

2. 1. 1. Analytic glosses

Analytic glosses can be explained in terms of "X is defined as Y". They are closer to our modern definition of words in dictionaries. Some more or less analytic glosses can be found in the *Shìmíng* and provide a rather good understanding of words defined.

(24.30)[12] 靷, 所以引車也 "*Yìn* 'horse belt' is what one uses to pull a cart."[13]

(1.79) 蒙, 日光不明, 蒙蒙然也 "*Méng* 'cloudy', 'obscurity', when the sunlight is not bright, it is 'misty'."

(27.1) 人始氣絕曰死, 死, 澌也, 就消澌也 "When a man begins to discontinue breathing, we talk about 'death'. 'Death' is (paronomastically) associated with *sī* 澌 'disappear', it is to move toward disintegration *xiāosī*."

(2.5) 廣平曰原；原, 元也, 如元氣廣大也 "A broad and flat (landscape) is called a plain ; *yuán* 'plain' is (paronomastically) associated with *yuán* 'beginning', it is broad like primeval cosmic energy".

(7. 54) 五家為伍[14], 以五為名也 "Five families form a *wǔ* 'a group of five', they are named from *wǔ* 'five'."

(1.25) 五行者, 五氣也, 於其方各施行也 "The five agents correspond to the five vital forces, each of them displays it's activity in its direction/ territory."

Entries in the *Shìmíng* are not limited to monosyllabic words:

(1.57) 霢霂[15], 小雨也, 言裁霢歷霑漬,　如人沐頭, 惟及其上枝而根不濡也 "*Màimù* 'drizzle' is to rain in small amounts. It signifies discontinuously drizzling and wetting

---

11 Bodman (1954: 12) also distinguishes three kinds of glosses in his work but in a different way: he regards the first A B 也 type glosses as the most commun compared to second A 猶 B 也, and the third including all the other ones with all sorts of explanations. A different perspective is followed here.

12 In the parenthesis I refer to the numbers given in Rèn Jìfǎng 2006 *(Shìmíng huì jiào* 釋名匯校).

13 Wú Chuí (2010: 40) shows that this gloss comes from Máo zhuàn 毛傳 *Xiǎo róng* 小戎, see Ruǎn Yuán 阮元 (1764-1849), *Shísān Jīng zhùshū* 十三經注疏 (henceforth abbreviated as SSJZS) [Commentaries and subcommentaries of the 13th Classics], Běijīng: Zhōnghuá shūjú, 2 vols. 1980: 370a.

14 This gloss differs from that given in *Zhōulǐ* 周禮 "Xiǎo Sītú" 小司徒 (SSJZS: 711a): 五人為伍 "Five men form a *wǔ* 'a group of five'."

15 See *Shījīng Xìn nán shān* 信南山 (SSJZS: 470c): 益之以霢霂, 既优既渥 "It adds to it drizzling rain, it is ample, it is moistening," (traduc. Karlgren); see also *Shuōwén jiězì* 1988: 241 or SW 11B 6a.

things as when someone washes *mù* his head, and (the water) only reaches the outer parts but not the hair-roots. »

(1.83) 流星, 星轉行如流水也 "*Liúxīng* 'shooting star' is a star that rolls along like flowing water."

2. 1. 2. Dialectal glosses

Like in *Fāngyán* 方言 or *Shuōwén jiězì*, we can find dialectal glosses in *Shìmíng*.[16]

(27.54) 翣, 齊人謂扇為翣, 此似之也, 象翣扇為清涼也. 翣有黼有畫, 各以其飾名之也 "*Shà* 'plumed streamer' (banners), in Qí they call a *shàn* 'fan' a *shà*, it resembles it. It depicts a plumed fan for keeping cool. Some *shà* have embroidery (*fú*), some have paintings on them, in each case one names them according to their decorations."

(1.84) 枉矢, 齊魯謂光景[17]為枉矢, 言其光行若射矢之所至也. 亦言其氣枉暴[18]有所災害也 "*Wǎng shǐ* (« twisted arrow »)), in Qí and Lǔ they represent luminescence (light) as *wǎng shǐ* "twisted arrow". It signifies the light moves along like an arrow that has been shot to hit its target. It also signifies vital force being warped and violent so as to inflict damage."

As a native of Qí 齊 (modern Shāndōng province) Liú Xī's "book abunds in references to pronunciations of Qí and adjoining areas, and in statements that the natives of Qí use certain special terms for certain objects." (Bodman 1954: 4). References to the following dialects: Qí 齊 [19 citations], Lǔ 魯 [7], Qīng 青州 [1], Xú 徐州 [3], and Qīng Xú 青徐 [10], Sòng 宋 [1], Yù 豫 [5], Yǎn 兗(兗州) [7], Sī 司 [2], Jì 冀 [4], Yōu zhōu 幽州 [1], Jīng (zhōu) 荊(州)[3], Guānxī 關西 [2], etc., are scattered all over the text. According to Wú Chuí (2010: 59), while Qīng 青 and Xú 徐 counted as Qí dialect, Yǎn 兗, Jì 冀, and Yù 豫 were close to Qí. We can even find some noticable distinctions between two dialects areas for the pronunciation of the word *tiān*:[19]

(1.1) 天, 豫, 司, 兗, 冀以舌腹言之. 天, 顯也, 在上高顯也. 青, 徐以舌頭言之. 天, 坦/垣也, 坦然高而遠也. (Bì Yuán 1.1 has *tǎn* 坦 instead of *yuán* 垣 'wall') "In Yù, Sī, Yǎn and Jì, *Tiān* 'Heaven' is pronounced with the belly of the tongue. *Tiān* is (paronomastically) associated with *xiǎn* 'manifest', it is high and prominently visible above. In Qīng and Xú, it is pronounced with the tip of the tongue. *Tiān* is (paronomastically) associated with *tǎn* 'level'. It is calmly high and at distance."

Yù, Sī, Yǎn and Jì represented the central area including the capital, "and perhaps the standard court language", whereas "the dialect of [Qīng] and [Xú] were spoken to the east of the central area." (Bodman 1954: 29).

---

16 See, for example, Huá Xuéchéng 華學誠. "Lùn Shìmíng de fāngyán yánjiū" 論釋名的方言研究 [Discussions on the study of dialects in Shìmíng], *Yángzhōu dàxué xuébào* 揚州大學學報 2003: 7-2, p. 53-59.

17 Bì Yuán 畢沅 (1730-1797) thinks that 光景 is in fact a mistake for 流星 "meteor, shooting star", and quotes the *Shǐjì* "Tiānguān shū»《天官書》: 枉矢, 類大流星, 蛇行而倉黑, 望之如有毛羽然. He also links the possible mistake to the resemblance between 流 without the constituent water on the left and 光, as well as the fact that both 星 and 景 have the constituant sun in their graph (*Shì míng shūzhèng bǔ* 釋名疏證補 [Emendation on the commentaries of *Shìmíng*]. Běijīng: Zhōnghuá. 2008: 22 (1.80).

18 According to *Hànyǔ dàcídiǎn* 漢語大詞典 vol 4 p. 796, *wǎng bào* 枉暴 should be understood as 違法殘暴 "transgressed brutality".

19 See the map p. 45 for the localisation of these two different areas.

Cases like *jué* 桷, in which Liú Xī refers to dialectal terms without mentioning the respective dialect, are not rare:

(17.26) 桷, 确[㭿][20]也 (…) 或謂之椽 (…) 或謂之榱 (…) "*Jué* 'rafter' is (paronomastically) associated with *què* 'solid' [*zhuó* (?)] (…) Some call it *chuán*; (…) Others call it *cuī* (…)."

We know from *Shuōwén jiĕzì* that "in Qín they used the name *wū chuán* 'lath sustaining the roofing' for *cuī* 'rafter', in Zhōu they called it *cuī*, and in Qí and Lŭ they called it *jué*." 榱, 秦名為屋椽, 周謂之榱, 齊魯謂之桷 (SW 6A 13a). In other words, this example shows that Liú Xī has chosen an entry that belongs to the Qí dialect without mentioning it. Bodman (1954: 9) notes that "Except in cases where dialect forms are so labelled we have no means of knowing when Liu used a dialect pronunciation and when he used a standard pronunciation."

2. 2. Encyclopeadic glosses

There are many descriptive and geographic glosses in the *Shìmíng*, but very few historical ones.

2. 2. 1. Descriptive glosses

(20.19) 《論語》紀孔子與諸弟子所語之言也 "The *Lúnyŭ* records the words spoken by Confucius with his disciples."

(4.1) 天下大水四, 謂之四瀆, 江, 河, 淮, 濟是也 "The four great rivers under Heaven are called the four Streams *dú*: they are the Jiāng, the Hé, the Huái and the Jĭ."

(19.11) 槧, 板之長三尺者也. 槧, 漸也, 言其漸漸然長也 "*Qiàn* 'the board for taking notes' is a kind of board that is three *chĭ* long. *Qiàn* is (paronomastically) associated with *jiàn* 'gradual', it signifies that it has gradually become longer."

2. 2. 2. Historical glosses

(20.33)   碑, 被也. 此本王莽時所設也. 施其轆轤以繩被其上, 以引棺也. 臣子追述君父之功美, 以書其上, 後人因焉. 無故建於道陌之頭, 顯見之處, 名其文就, 謂之碑也 "*Bēi* 'tombstone' is (paronomastically) associated with *bèi* 'cover'. These were introduced in Wáng Măng's (33 BC-23 AD) time[21]. One installed a winch (*lùlu*) and fixed (被) it on the

---

20 Wáng Xiānqiān 王先谦 (1842-1918) (*Shìmíng Shūzhèng bŭ, Xù Shìmíng, Shìmíng bŭyí* 释名疏证补, 續釋名, 釋名補遺, Shànghăi: Shànghăi gŭjí, 1984: 271) quotes Qīng dynasty commentator Wú Yìyín 吳翊寅 who thinks that *què* 确 corresponds to *zhuó* 㭿 which, according to *Shuōwén* (4B 21b), is glossed as 㭿: 角長兒 'descriptive of long corners'.

21 Note that Bì Yuán 畢沅 (2008: 219 (20: 32)) has emended the beginning of the text in the following way: 碑, 被也. 此本葬時所設也. 於鹿盧, 以繩被其上, 引以下棺也. 臣子追述君父之功美, 以書其上, 後人因焉. 無故建於道陌之頭, 顯見之處, 名其文就, 謂之碑也 "*Bēi* 'tombstone' is (paronomastically) associated with *bèi* 'cover'. These were introduced with the funerals. One fixed (被) a cord on a winch (*lùlu*) to pull down the coffin. Ministers or children who transmit their rulers' and father's merits and excellent points would go on to write on them, and later people followed that practice (of writing on the *bēi*). Without such (burial) background the *bēi* were set up at the ends of roads and paths between fields to make explicit their culture significance and these were (also) referred as *bēi*. ». Bì Yuán's emendation is based on *Guăngyùn*, *Jíyùn*, *Lèipiān* and *Tàipíng Yùlăn* 太平御覽. The *Guăngyùn* writes: 釋名曰: 本葬時所設臣子追述君父之功以書其上 (*Xīn Jiàobĕn Sòng bĕn Guăngyùn* 新校宋本廣韻,

tombstone with a cord in order to pull the coffin. Ministers or children who transmit their rulers' and father's merits and excellent points would go on to write on them, and (after Wáng Mǎng) later people followed that practice (of writing on the *bēi*). Without such (burial) background the *bēi* were set up at the ends of roads and paths between fields to make explicit their culture significance and these were (also) referred as *bēi*."

According to Hú Pǔ'ān 胡樸安 (1984: 221), this is a good example of Liú Xī's introduction of Hàn institutions in his work.

2. 2. 3. Geographic glosses

Geographic glosses are gathered in section 7 *Shì zhōu guó* 釋州國 "Explaining regions and states".

(7.14) 古有營州, 齊衛之地, 於天文屬營室, 取其名也 "In ancient times there was the Yíng region in the territory of Qí and Wèi; since astrologically it belonged to the Yíng House /constellation it took its name from it."

(7.34) 汝南, 在汝水南也 "Rǔnán is located south of river Rǔ."

2. 3. Non-semantically motivated glosses

2. 3. 1. Glosses simply motivated phonetically

- a) The first sub-type represents simple A B 也 phonetic glosses. There are only about 25 examples of such glosses in the whole text. The closeness in pronunciation between A and B is the main criteria whereas semantic links can be streched or rather far fetched.

(8.12) 肉, 柔也 "*Ròu* 'meat' is (paronomastically) associated with *róu* 'soft'."[22]

(12.14) 悌, 弟也 "*Tì* 'brotherly piety' is (paronomastically) associated with *dì* 'younger brother'."

(16.6) 袪, 虛也 "*Qū* 'sleeve cuff' is (paronomastically) associated with *xū* 'empty'."

(27.50) 葬, 藏也 "*Zàng* 'bury' is (paronomastically) associated with *cáng* 'conceal'."

(8.37) 口, 空也 "*Kǒu* 'mouth, opening' approximates with *kōng* 'hole'."

(9.22) 側, 逼[偪]也 "*Cè* '(cause to) slant' is (paronomastically) associated with *bī* 'compel'."[23]

- b) The second sub-type represents A B 也 phonetic glosses followed by a paraphrase meant to specify the supposed relationship between the two terms associated in Liú Xī's punning glosses.[24] These are very numerous.

Hóng yè wénhuà 洪葉文化 2001: 43- 5 (上平五支)); both the *Jíyùn* 集韻 (平上一, 16b) (Shànghǎi gǔjí; 1985: 32-4) and the *Lèipiān* 類篇 (Shànghǎi gǔjí; 1988: 333-16) write 釋名: 被也葬時設施鹿盧 以繩被其上引以下棺. Bì Yuán considers that in modern editions the character *zàng* 葬 has been replaced by *mǎng* 莽, and *wáng* 王 added before *mǎng*.

22 *Ròu* 肉 (GSR 1033a) was pronounced *ɲuwk in Early Middle Chinese (according to Pulleyblank as quoted in TLS: http://tls.uni-hd.de/procSearch/procSearchPhon.lasso) (*nyuwH or nyuwk according to Baxter 2006 reconstruction of Middle Chinese) and *róu* 柔 (GSR 1105a): * ɲuw (Pulleyblank as quoted in TLS) (*nyuw in Baxter 2006: http:// lodel.ehess.fr/crlao/docannexe.php?id=1227).

23 Both terms had entering tone in ancient Chinese: *cè* 側 (GSR 906c) <*ʈʂɨk and *bī* 逼 (GSR 933p) < *pɨk (according to Pān Wùyún 潘悟雲 as quoted in TLS).

24 We also find an elaborated paraphrase following the formula A B 也 in *Shuōwén* when Xǔ Shèn wants to explicit obscure glosses like, for example, in the case of *méi* 媒,謀也謀合二姓 "*méi* is to make plans, (i.e.) to make plans for the reunion of (members of) two families." (SW 12B 2a).

The sun and the moon are first defined according to their contrastive nature with the formula A B 也, before Liú Xī provides an explanation for it:

(1.2) 日, 實也, 光明盛實也[25] "*Rì* 'sun' is (paronomastically) associated with *shí* 'full': its light is fully substancial."

(1.3) 月, 缺也, 滿則缺也. "*Yuè* 'moon' is (paronomastically) associated with *quē* 'lacking': it wanes after being full."

(1.18) 春, 蠢也, 動而生也[26] "*Chūn* 'spring' is (paronomastically) associated with *chǔn* 'wriggle': things come to existence after they start moving." On the other hand, "*Dōng* 'winter' is (paronomastically) associated with *zhōng* 'end': things stop growing (in winter)." 冬, 終也, 物終成也 (1.20).

(1. 27) 木, 冒也, 華葉自覆冒也 "'Being a tree' *mù* consists in being covered *mào*, [the tree] is naturally covered with flowers and leaves."[27]

- c) In the third sub-type of phonetically motivated glosses, the 'homophonous' word is included in a whole sentence.

(11. 6) 曾祖, 從下推上, 祖位轉增益也 "*zēngzǔ* 'great grand-father', the ones below (*i.e.* the ones who died after) push the ones above (*i.e.* the ones who died before), so the position of the ancestors is removed and goes further up ('augments' (*zēngyì*) in the ancestral hierachy)."

2. 3. 2. Glosses motivated phonetically and graphically

In these examples, the graphic constituents of the written words are used to support or induce the phonetic gloss and show the supposed close links between written words and what they refer to.

(14. 21) 錦, 金也. 作之用功, 重於其價如金, 故其制字帛與金也[28] "*Jǐn* brocade is (paronomastically) associated with *jīn* gold. One puts a lot of effort to make it (the brocade), and values it as if it was gold, therefore when they made the written word (character) they associated *bó* 'silk' with *jīn* 'gold'."

---

25 Compare with *Shuōwén* (7A 1a): 日,實也, 太陽之精不虧 "'Being the sun' *rì* consists in 'being full': the quintessence of *yáng* does not decrease."

26 We find the same gloss in *Lǐjì* 45.1. 29 (SSJZS: 1684c) 春之為言蠢也 "Le mot tch'ouēn printemps signifie tch'ouèn exciter et produire. » (Couvreur, Séraphin, *Mémoire sur les bienséances et les cérémonies,* Paris: Cathasia, tome II-2, 1950: 667); "The name of spring (also) denotes the appearance of insects beginning to move." (TLS). Wú Chuí (2010: 38) also quotes the *Chūnqiū yuān mìng bāo* 春秋元命包 and the *Chūnqiū shuō tící* 春秋說題辭 which provide more or less identical phonetic glosses.

27 Note that the same paronomastic gloss is followed by a different explanation in *Shuōwén*: 木,冒也. 冒地而生.東方之行 "Tree is (paronomastically) associated with *mào* 'to cover', (trees) cover the ground as they grow. It corresponds to the East element." (SW 6A 1a).

28 Bì Yuán's emendation of the text, on the basis of *Guǎngyùn*, does not make much difference for the translation: 錦, 金也. 作之用功重,其價如金, 故其制字從帛與金也 "*Jǐn* brocade is (paronomastically) associated with *jīn* gold. One puts a lot of effort to make it (the brocade) and values it, it is as valuable as gold, therefore they made the written word (character) with the (constituent) *bó* 'silk' associated with *jīn* 'gold'."

(11.61) 無妻曰鰥；鰥，昆也[29]；昆，明也，愁悒不寐目恒鰥鰥然也. 故其字從魚, 魚目恒不閉者也 "A man without a wife is called a widowed. *Guān* 'widowed' is (paronomastically) associated with *kūn* ('cousin') and *kūn* is (also associated with) *míng* 'eyesight': the sadness of a wifeless man prevents him from sleeping and gives him this constant (fish) open eye look, hence the written word has 'fish' as a semantic constituent. A fish never closes its eyes."

(7.47) 周制, 九夫為井, 其制似'井'字也 "According to the rules of the Zhōu, nine individuals constitute a *jǐng* 'well-field' pattern, its system resembles the character 'well'. "[30]

(11. 38) 舅謂姊妹之子曰甥, 甥亦生也. 出配他男而生故其制字男旁作生也 "The uncle (the mother's brother) refers to the sons of his sisters (*zǐ-mèi*) by saying *shēng* 甥 'nephew'. *Shēng* is associated with *shēng* 'live'. At the beginning, they (nephews) are raised in the company of other men, therefore when they made the written word (character), (the constituent) *shēng* 'live'/ grow' was put next to the (the constituent) *nán* 男 'male'."

There are only six examples in which Liú Xī uses graphs to reveal the motivation at the basis of written words in the *Shìmíng*. However, these examples show the importance attributed to the semantic constituents analysis at that time to retrieve and explain the meaning of words or characters.

2. 3. 3. Homographic glosses motivated by the identity of the graph

The A A 也 formula is used in two different cases: it may refer to words written with the same graph but with different pronunciations and meanings, or to derived meanings. There are about twenty examples of such homographic glosses in *Shìmíng* for which it is not always easy to figure out which type is relevant.

(1.9) 宿宿也.星各止宿其處也 "*Xiù* 'constellation' is (paronomastically) associated with *sù* 'stay, station': each star stays in its location."

(20.12) 傳傳也,以傳示後人也 "*Zhuàn* 'explanatory record' is (paronomastically) associated with *chuán* 'transmit', it is used to transmit to later generation."

(14.14) 布布也 "*Bù* 'cloth' is (paronomastically) associated with *bù* 'spread'."

In these examples what looks like the reduplication of one and the same word, refers in fact to two different words written with the same character. Their pronunciation and meaning are different in the first two examples, but they refer to homophones in the third one.[31]

---

29 The complicated detour made by Liú Xī in this gloss requires a few explanations: in *Shuōwén, kūn* 鼎 is glossed as 'cousin' by the Zhōu people: 鼎: 周人謂兄曰鼎 (SW 5B 16b). Thus we can deduce that Liú Xī's gloss 鰥, 昆也 refers in fact to *kūn* 鼎 'cousin', since 昆 also refers to 'cousin'. In addition, another meaning of *kūn* 昆 'bright, clear; eyesight' is provided by Liú Xī, most certainly because of the presence of *rì* 日 'sun' in the graph *kūn* 昆.

30 See Zhèng Xuán's commentary to *Zhōulǐ* 周禮 11 *Xiǎo Sītú* 小司徒 'The Vice Minister of Education' (SSJZS 1980: 711c):..小司徒為經之,立其五溝五塗之界,,其制似'井' 之'字. "The Vice Minister of Education measures it (the well-field system), he establishes the boundaries between five gullies and five paths, its system resembles the character 'well'."

31 According to Hé Jiǔyíng 何九盈 (*Zhōngguó gǔdài yǔyánxué shǐ* 中國古代語言學史 [The history of Chinese linguistics], Béijīng: Béijīng dàxué chūbǎnshè, 2006: 70), the word defined is usually a noun whereas the word used to define it is a verb.

(1.12) 陰陰也[32], 氣在內奧蔭也 "*Yīn* (as in *yīn yáng*) is associated with *yīn* 'shade/shady'. The vital energy stays deep inside in darkness."

(19.13) 籍籍也, 所以籍疏人名戶口也[33] "*Jí* 'document' is associated with *jí* "register", it is where one registers names and households."

These last two homophonous examples refer to derived meanings of *yīn* 陰 and *jí* 籍.

3. Terminology used to gloss words in the *Shìmíng*

Like other commentators before him, Liú Xī employs certain technical terms to gloss his lexical entries and show the supposed semantico-phonetic links between words. *Yuē* 曰, *wèi* 謂, *yán* 言, *míng* 名, *chēng* 稱 may look like synonyms, but they all have their distinct semantic nuances. [34]

- *Yuē* 曰 'be called', has characteristic passive uses where the word comes close to functioning as a copula:

(10 .1) 人始生曰嬰兒… "At his birth a human being is called *yīng'ér* 'baby'."

(16.1) 凡服, 上曰衣, 衣, 依也, 人所依以芘寒暑也. 下曰裳, 裳, 障也, 所以自障蔽也[35] "Generally speaking, the upper part of clothes is called *yī* 'garment/jacket'. *Yī* is (paronomastically) associated with *yī* 'to rely on'. It is the means a man rely on to protect from the heat and the cold (*bì* 芘 stands for *bì* 庇 'protect'); the lower part is called *cháng* 'skirt'. *Cháng* is associated with *zhàng* 'conceal', it is the means by which one hides and covers oneself."[36]

---

32 Note that in (8.74) [but (8.68) in Bì Yuán] *yīn* is glossed by a near-homophone written with the same phonetic constituent: 陰, 蔭也, 言所在蔭翳也 "*Yīn* (as in *yīn yáng*) is (paronomastically) associated with *yìn* 'shadow'; it refers to the shadow one represents (rather than the shadow something makes (?))"; whereas in (24.29), we find the same gloss followed by a different explanation: 陰, 蔭也, 橫側車前以陰笒也 "*Yīn* (as in *yīn yáng*) is (paronomastically) associated with 'shade, it is the bamboo in front and across the carriage that provides shade."

33 Bì Yuán (19.11) considers that 人名 is a mistake for 人民 'people' and quotes Zhèng's commentary to *Zhōulǐ* 周禮 *Xiǎo Sīmín* 司民 (SSJZS 1980: 878c) saying: 版,今戶籍也 "*Bǎn* corresponds to nowadays household register."

34 One notes a single example of the use of *yún* 云 in the whole *Shìmíng*: (16. 62) 齊人云'搏腊', '搏腊' 猶 '把作'; 麤貌也 "Qí people say '*bólà*'; '*bólà*' is like '*bàzuò*'; it is descriptive of coarse." See also the gloss (1.58), p. 40 below.

35 Note that this gloss differs from that given by Zhèng Xuán in his commentary to the *Yílǐ* 儀禮 (SSZZS 1980: 1096c), see also Zhāng Shùnhuī 張舜徽 (*Zhèng xué cóngzhù* 鄭學叢著, Jǐnán: Qí lǔ shūshè, 1984: 139): 凡服,上曰衰,下曰裳,麻在首在要皆曰絰 "Generally speaking, the upper part of clothes is called *shuāi* 'garment for mourning'; the lower part is called *cháng* 'skirt'. Garments with hemp for the head or hemp for the waist are all called *dié* 'mourning garments'."

36 *Báihǔ tōng* 9 (Chén Lì 陳立, *Báihǔ tōng shū zhèng* 白虎通疏證, Běijīng: Zhōnghuá, 2 vols., 1994: 433) has 所以名為裳何?衣者, 隱也, 裳者, 彰【障】也. 所以隱形自障閉也 "Why [are robes] called *yī-shang*? *Yī* means *yīn* 'to conceal'; *shang* means *zhàng* 'to screen'. With [the robes] the [bodily] forms are concealed, and one screens and shuts oneself off [from shame]." (tr. Tjan Tjoe Som. *Po Hu T'ung: The Comprehensive Discussion in the White Tiger Hall*, Leiden: Brill. 1952: 600).

(11.20) 仲父之弟曰叔父;叔, 少也 "The young brother of the father's younger brother (*zhòngfù*) is called *shūfù* (father's younger brother): *shū* stands for *shào* 'young'." (Compare with 11.41, p. 40 below)

Yuē 曰 is also often used in dialectal glosses:

(17.40) … 青徐曰椐, 椐, 居也, 居於中也 "In Qīng and Xú it is called *jū*, *jū* is (paronomastically) associated with *jū* 'reside' in the centre."

Yuē 曰 can naturally introduce another way of calling a word with the formula *yòu yuē* 又曰, *huò yuē* 或曰, *yì yuē* 亦曰:

(25.1) 船, 循也, 循水而行也. 又曰舟, 言周流也 "*Chuán* 'boat' is (paronomastically) associated with *xún* 'follow': it goes along the course of the flow (?), it is also called *zhōu* 'boat', it signifies to travel around."

(17.79) 廁, 雜也, 言人雜廁在上非一也. 或曰溷, 言溷濁也… "*Cè* 'mixed/ latrines' is (paronomastically) associated with *zá* 'mixed', it signifies many people go there; it is also called *hùn* 'latrines'; it signifies dirty place."

(4.22) 水注谷曰溝, 田間之水亦曰溝 "Water running in a valley is called *gōu* 'gulley', water between fields is also called *gōu* 'gulley'."

- *Wèi* 謂 'refer to', 'label as' indicates the way a person or a group of persons (not always defined) refer to something.

(4.1) 天下大水四, 謂之四瀆, 江, 河, 淮, 濟是也 "The four great rivers under Heaven are called the four Streams *dú*: they are the Jiāng, the Hé, the Huái, and the Jǐ."

(27.26) 漢以來謂死為物故, 言其諸物皆就朽故也 "Since Hàn times death is labeled *wùgù*, it signifies that all things move toward decay."

(11.39) 妾謂夫之嫡妻曰女君 "Concubines refer to legal wife by saying 'ruler's wife'."

(11.47) 兩婿相謂曰亞,[37]言一人取姊, 一人取妹 "Among son-in-laws they call each other *yà* 'brother-in-law', it signifies that one has married the elder sister and the other one the younger sister."

In these two last examples *wèi* 謂 is used in combination with *yuē* 曰

Wèi 謂 is also often used in dialectal glosses:

(14.28) 繐, 齊人謂涼為惠, 言服之輕細涼惠也 "*Huì* 'fine cloth', the people in Qí say *huì* to refer to *liáng* 'cool', it means that the lightness and thinness of the clothe is 'cool' and 'gentle'."

(11.8) 兄, 荒也;荒, 大也. 故青徐人謂兄為荒也 "*Xiōng* 'elder brother' is (paronomastically) associated with *huāng* 'vast'; *huāng* is a way of being big. Thus the people in the region of Qīng and Xú refer to their elder brother by saying *huāng*."

---

37 See Máo Hēng's 毛亨 commentary to the ode 191.4 of the *Shījīng* 《詩經.小雅.節南山》:瑣瑣姻亞，則無膴仕 "Then you petty relatives will not enjoy great offices" (trad. Karlgren): for which he says：兩婿相謂曰亞 "Among son-in-laws they call each other *yà* 'brother-in-law'", SSJZS: 441a.

The terms *huò wèi* 或謂 (8 occurences) and *yòu wèi* 又謂 (18) also appear in *Shìmíng*, but naturally there isn't any occurrence of *yì wèi* 亦謂.

(11.5) 祖, 祚也, 祚物先也. 又謂之王父,王,暀也. 家中所歸暀也. 王母亦如之 "*Zǔ* 'being higher ancestor' consists in *zuò* 'conferring blessings', they (higher ancestors) confer things upon 'ancestors'. One also refers to it as *wángfù* 'grand-father': *wáng* is (paronomastically) associated with *wǎng* 'virtue'. He is the medium who brings virtue to the family. The same thing applies to the name *wáng mǔ* 王母 'grand-mother'."

- *Yán* 言 "signify, mean" is mostly used to explain the meaning or the motivation behind words:

(10.4) 兒始能行曰孺；孺, 濡也, 言濡弱也 "When a baby is able to walk (for the first time) he is called *rú* 'child'. *Rú* 'child' is (paronomastically) associated with *rú* 濡 [儒] 'weak', it signifies 'weak'."

(8. 82) 腕, 宛也, 言可宛屈也 "*Wàn* 'wrist' is (paronomastically) associated with *wǎn* 'twist', it means it can be bent."

(5.13) 澤中有丘曰《都丘》, 言蟲鳥往所都聚也 "In the marsh, hills are called '*dōuqiū*', it means worms and birds go where they can all gather (*dōujù*)."

(4.8) 山夾水曰澗；澗, 間也, 言在兩山之間也 "A current squeezed between two mountains is called 'a ravine, a gully' (*jiàn*) ; *jiàn* is (paronomastically) associated with *jiān* 'in between', it signifies it is between two mountains."

As we have seen above (1.84, p. 31), or will see below (1.58, p. 40), *yì yán* 亦言 (31 occurences) 'also signify, also mean' and *yòu yán* 又言 (2 occurences) 'others also say' can be given as a complement of information or for an alternative paronomastic gloss.
There are about 35 sentences with the formula *zhī yán* 之言, but none with the formula A 之為言 B 'the etymology of A is B', 'A means B' often discussed elsewhere.

(27.10) 死於水者曰溺, 溺, 弱也, 不能自勝之言也 "Those who die from being submerged in water are called *nì* 'drowned', *nì* is associated with *ruò* 'weak', it means not being able to cope."

If we compare, for example, *Báihǔ tōng* 白虎通 and *Shìmíng*, we notice that the formula X 之為言 in *Báihǔ tōng* often corresponds to the formula A B 也 in *Shìmíng*:
月之為言闕也, 有滿有闕也 (*Báihǔ tōng* 9: 424) "*Yuè* 'moon' means *quē* 'defective'. It is sometimes full, sometimes defective."
月, 缺也；滿則缺也 (*Shìmíng* 1.3) "*Yuè* 'moon' is (paronomastically) associated with 'lacking': it wanes after being full."
禮之為言履也 (*Báihǔ tōng* 4: 93) "*Lǐ* 'rites' means *lǚ* 'to tread/ shoes'."
履, 禮也 (*Shìmíng* 16. 58) "*Lǚ* shoes is (paronomastically) associated with 'rite'."
水之為言(淮)准也 (*Báihǔ tōng* 4 : 167). "'Water' *shuǐ* means *zhǔn* 'level'."
水，準也 (*Shìmíng* 1.28) "'Water' *shuǐ* is (paronomastically) associated with *zhǔn* 'level'."
Yán 言 can also be used for 'say, speak, pronounce' as we have seen above (1.1, p. 31) « In Yù, Sī, Yǎn and Jì, *tiān* 天 'Heaven' is pronounced with the belly of the tongue (以舌腹言之)..."

(12.21) 厚, 後也, 有終後[38]也, 故青徐人言厚曰後也 "*Hòu* 'thick' is (paronomastically) associated with *hòu* 'after'; when there is an end it comes after, thus the people in Qīng and Xú, say 'after' when they talk about 'thick'."

- *Míng* 名 refers to a 'name' or a 'denomination'. There are about 76 entries containing *míng* 名 in Liú Xī's text.

(1.73)　[1.69]　望, 月滿之名也. 月大十六日, 小十五日. 日在東, 月在西, 遙相望也 "*Wàng* 'full moon/ look' is the denomination for the moon when it is full. The moon is big for sixteen days and small for fifteen days. When the sun is in the East and the moon in the West, they look each other from a distance."

Now, in combination with *wéi* 為, *jiù* 就, *qǔ* 取 or *jǔ* 舉, and *gù* 故, *míng* 名 is used to explain why it is that things have the name they do have, or where the denomination comes from: it can be linked to a place, a form, a decoration, a colour, a gesture, etc.

(7.11) 兗州取兗水以為名也 "The region Yǎn gets its name from the river Yǎn."

(16.44) 交領, 就形名之也 "Jiāolǐng is named in accordance to its shape."

(5.8) 圜丘, 方丘, 就其方圜名之也 "The round mount and the square mount are named in accordance with their square and round (shape)."

(22.12) 枇杷, 本出於胡中, 馬上所鼓也. 推手前曰枇, 引手卻曰杷. 象其鼓時, 因以為名也 "The *pípa* originated from the barbarians and was played on horses. Pushing the hand forward is called *pí*, drawing it backwards is called *pá*. It was named from the imitation of its performance."

(7.53) 五家為伍, 以五為名也 "Five families constitute a 'group of five', it gets its name from 'five'."

When *qǔ* 取 is used it always refers to the terminological choices a language represents. In such cases it can be translated as 'to take or to get its name from'. The choice of the name is thus itself a subject discussed in *Shìmíng*.

(7.4)　荊州取名於荊山也. 必取荊為名者, 荊, 警也. 南蠻數為寇逆, 其民有道後服, 無道先彊, 常警備之也 "Jīngzhōu takes its name from the mountain Jīng. It had to take the name Jīng because *jīng* is (paronomastically) associated with *jǐng* 'defend'. Many bandits rebelt among Southern barbarians, the people (of Jīng) who followed the *dào* stayed behind obediently, those who did not follow the *dào* stayed strong in the front, they always defended it cautiously."

(7.10) 冀州亦取地以為名也 "The Jì prefecture also gets its name from a territory."

- *Chēng* 稱 'name, call', refers in general to a "formal or respectual designation".[39]

(10.9)　十五曰童, 故禮有陽童, 牛羊之無角者曰童. 山無草木曰童, 言未巾冠似之也. 女子之未笄者亦稱之也. "At the age of fifteen one is called *tóng* 'adolescent', thus there is the 'The Bright lad' in the *Lǐjì*,[40] and bovines or sheep without horns are called *tóng*. A mountain without grass or tree is called *tóng*, it signifies that before capping (a young man) resembles it. The young girl without hairpin is also called this way."

---

[38] According to Rèn Jìfǎng 任继昉 (2006: 175), the *Gézhì cóngshū* 格致叢書 version of the Míng dynasty had 厚 instead of 後, but it does not help for the understanding of the gloss.

39 Compare with *Shuōwén* (12B 1a): 媼,女老偁也 "*Ǎo* is a respectful designation for a female old person."

40 See *Lǐjì* 20 (SSJZS: 1553c); Couvreur tome II-1, 1950: 129, " le brillant jeune homme".

(11.41) 叔, 少也, 幼者稱也 "*Shū* is (paronomastically) associated with *shào* 'young', it is a formal designation for young." (Compare with 11.20, p. 37 above)

(11.42) 夫之兄曰公；公, 君也；君, 尊稱也 "The brothers of the husband are called *gōng* 'father', *gōng* is associated with *jūn* 'ruler' which is a respectual designation."

(8.95) 髀, 卑也, 在下稱也 "*Bì* 'thighbone' is (paronomastically) associated with *bēi* 'humble', it is a designation for what is inferior."

(8.35) 瞳子, 瞳, 重也 (...) 子, 小稱也 "*Tóngzi* 'pupil of the eye', *tóng* 'pupil' is (paronomastically) associated with *chóng* 'double layer' (...) *Zi* is a denomination for small things."

Míng 名, *yuē* 曰, *wèi* 謂, and *yán* 言 are often used with *gù* 故 to explain the motivation behind words. According to my counting, we can find about 40 ocurrences of 故…, 名, including 2 occurences of *gù yīn yǐ wéi míng* 故因以為名 'thus for this reason it gets its name', 1 of *gù yīn yǐ míng zhī* 故因以名之也 'thus for this reason it is named this way', and 2 *yīn yǐ míng zhī* 因以名之 'for this reason it is named this way'. There are also about 5 occurrences of *gù yuē* 故. . .曰, 7 of *gù wèi* 故. . . 謂 (*cf.* 11.8, p. 37 above), and 9 of *gù yán* 故. . . 言 (*cf.* 12.21, p. 39 above).

- *Yóu* 猶 'be like' functions like a copula-like verb, it is often used in the general formula A 猶 B (24 occurences).

Yóu sometimes links two monosyllabic words such as in the formula A 猶 B (13 occurences):

(8.61) 臆猶抑也, 抑,氣所塞也 "*Yì* 'chest' (ribcage) is like *yì* 'oppress / restrain', *yì* 'restrain / control' is what 'blocks' (retains) the air."

- *Yóu* can also link two disyllabic words such as in the formula AA ' 猶 BB' (7 occurences)

(9.60) 摩娑猶末殺也, 手上下之言也 "*Mōsuō* 'to caress' is like *mōshā*, it signifies that the hand goes up and down."

- And it can also link a monosyllabic entry to a disyllabic word like in the formula A 猶 AA; A 猶 BB, (4 examples):

(1.58) 雲猶云云, 眾盛意也. 又言運也；運, 行也 "*Yún* ('cloud') is like *yúnyún* 'such and such', it has many meanings. Others also say it is like *yùn* 'transport', to transport is to move."

(17.50) 堂, 猶堂堂, 高顯貌也 "*Táng* ceromonial hall is like *tángtáng* 'elevated and dignified', it is descriptive of high and visible."

(14.32) 緜, 猶湎湎,[41] 柔而無文也 "*Miǎn* 'coton' is like *miǎnmiǎn* 'floatting', it is soft and without decorations."

The question is why does Liú Xī employ A猶B instead of A B 也? Is there a difference between the two formulae? Could A猶B be less assertive or less attested than the A B 也,

---

41 According to the *Hànyǔ dàcídiǎn* vol. 5: 1454, *miǎnmiǎn* 湎湎 is glossed as "descriptive of undulating", 'flowing', 'flotting': 流移貌.

since, as we have seen, most of the A B 也 glosses in *Shìmíng* can be found under A之為言 B in *Báihǔ tōng*, whereas glosses with 猶 in *Shìmíng* are not attested in *Báihǔ tong*?[42]

- *Rú* 如 'be like' (165 occurences) and *ruò* 若 'be like' (32 occurences) are often used to show the relation or the motivation behind paronomastic glosses.

    (1.15) 暑, 煮也, 熱如煮物也 "*Shǔ* 'hot weather' is (paronomastically) associated with *zhǔ* 'cook': it is hot like when cooking things."

    (1.17) 雨, 羽也, 如鳥羽,動則散也 "*Yǔ* 'rain' is (paronomastically) associated with *yǔ* 'feather': it resembles the feathers of a bird, when (the bird) moves, they scatter all over)."

    (1.59) 雷, 硠也, 如轉物有所硠雷之聲也. "*Lèi* 'thunder' is associated with *láng* 'sound of stones': it is like a resounding sound after moving things."

    (17.28) 楣, 眉也, 近前若面之有眉也 "*Méi* 'lintel' is (paronomastically) associated with *méi* 'eyebrow' ; it comes forward like the eyebrows on the face."

- *Mào* 貌 'appearance, shape' > 'descriptive of' (25 occurences) and the suffix *rán* 然 (126 occurences) are also often used to provide explanations for the reason why things have the name they do have.

    (23.38) 旛, 幡也, 其貌幡幡也 "*Fān* 'banner' is (paronomastically) associated with *fān* 'flag'; its appears waving about."

    (1.49) 庚, 猶更也;庚, 堅強貌也 "*Gēng* 'seventh Heavenly Stem' is like *gèng* 'change' ; *gēng* is descriptive of strength."

    (12.145) 潔確也.確然不群貌也 "*Jié* 'pure' is (paronomastically) associated with *què* 'firm'; it is descriptive of firmly unmixed" (in this example both *rán* and *mào* are used).

    (12.74) 榮猶煢也. 煢煢, 照明貌也 "*Róng* 'glorious' is like *yíng* 'star' ; *yíngyíng* is descriptive of shining."

    (1.4) 光, 晃也, 晃晃然也 "*Guāng* 'light' is (paronomastically) associated with *huàng* 'bright; it is shining."

    (1.79) 蒙, 日光不明, 蒙蒙然也 "*Méng* 'cloudy'/'obscurity' when the sunlight is not clear, it is misty."

4. Terminology used to indicate sound or pronunciation in the *Shìmíng*

Liú Xī employs different, and sometimes quite original, terms to indicate the pronunciation of words. He uses some fairly precise and technical formulae such as *yǐ shé fù yán zhī* 以舌腹言之 'pronounced with the belly of the tongue' or *yǐ shé tou yán zhī* 以舌頭言之 'pronounced with the tip of the tongue', as we have already seen under 2.1.2, or *héng kǒu hé chún yán zhī* 橫口合脣言之 'pronounced with a horizontal > open mouth and round lips', and *cù kǒu kāi chún tuī qì yán zhī* 踧口開脣推氣言之 'pronounced with a flat mouth, open lips and aspiration'.

---

42 Indeed all the glosses with 猶 in *Shìmíng* are not attested in *Báihǔ tōng*, we only find 堂之為言明也 "*Táng* 'hall' means *míng* 'bright' (*Lǐjì*)" (*Báihǔ tōng* 12, Chén Lì 1994: 595, Tjan Tjoe Som 1952: 655) which differs from Liú Xī's interpretation: 堂, 猶堂堂.

(1.1) "In Yù, Sī, Yǎn and Jì, *tiān* 天 'Heaven' was pronounced with the belly of the tongue (以舌腹言之), like *xiǎn* 顯 'manifest'..." and "in Qīng and Xú, it was pronounced with the tip of the tongue 以舌頭言之, like *tǎn* 坦 'level'..."

In another passage Liú Xī indicates the differences in pronunciation for the word 'wind' according to Yǎn 兗, Yù 豫, Sī 司, Qīng 青 and Xú 徐. Yǎn was located south of Shāndōng province, Yù and Sī in Hénán province, Qīng between the East of Tàishān in Shāndōng province and the Bóhǎi sea, and Xú in the Northwest part of Jiāngsū province. See the map p. 45.

(1.11) 風, 兗豫司橫口合脣言之. 風, 氾也, 其氣博氾而動物也. 青徐言風, 踧口開脣推氣言之. 風, 放也, 氣放散也 "In Yǎn, Yù, and Sī, *fēng* 'wind' is pronounced with a horizontal > open mouth and round lips. *Fēng* is (paronomastically) associated with *fàn* 'broad', its *qì* 'energy' is broad and moves things. In Qīng and Xú when they say 'wind' they pronounce it with a flat mouth, open lips and aspiration. *Fēng* is (paronomastically) associated with *fàng* 'release: the air is released and diffused (?)."

- Shēng rú 聲如 'pronounce like'

There are four occurences of the original expression *shēng rú* 聲如 'pronounced like' in *Shìmíng*:

(12. 72) (…) 汝潁貴聲如歸往之歸也 "In Rǔnán (Hénán) and in Yǐngchuān (Hénán) *guì* is pronounced like *guī* in *guīwǎng*."

(13.31) 豉, 嗜也. 五味調和, 須之而成, 乃可甘嗜也. 故齊人謂豉聲如嗜也 "*Chǐ / shì* 'soy' is (paronomastically) associated with *shì* 'to be fond of'. If one mixes it with the five flavours and waits for it to be ready, then one can savour it. In ancient times, when the people in Qí refered to *chǐ/ shì* they pronounced it like *shì*."

(22.26) 人聲曰歌, 歌, 柯也, 所歌之言是其質也. 以聲吟詠有上下, 如草木之有柯葉也. 故兗冀言歌聲如柯也 "The songs of humans are called *gē* 'song'. *Gē* 'song' is (paronomastically) associated with *kē* 'branch'; the words that are sung correspond to the substance (main body/ trunk). When one intones poetry there are high and low (pitches), like trees that have branches and leaves. Thus in Yǎn (Shāndōng) and in Jì (Héběi) when they say *gē* 'song' they pronounced it like *kē* 'branch'."

(24.1) 車, 古者曰車, 聲如居 "*Chē* 'chart', in ancient times when they said 'chart' they pronounced it like *jū*."

- Dú yuē 讀曰 'to be pronounced, read like'

There is only one example of pronunciation instruction in terms of *dú yuē* 讀曰, which is related to a local or dialectal gloss, but no use of *dú ruò* 讀若 in the *Shìmíng*:

(17.52) 楹, 亭也. 亭亭然孤立, 旁無所依也. 齊魯讀曰輕; 輕, 勝也. 孤立獨處能勝任上重也 "*Yíng* 'pillar' is (paronomastically) associated with *tíng* 'tower'. Gracefully erected it is isolated with nothing aside to rely on. In Qí and Lǔ they read it *qīng* 'light'; *qīng* is (paronomastically) associated with *shèng* 'win'; isolated and alone it is qualified to overpass what is *zhòng* 'heavy'."

In *Shuōwén jiĕzì* we can find many examples of *dú ruò* 讀若 or *dú rú* 讀如,[43] but it is not quite sure what exactly they refer to: special conventions for the reading aloud of characters in ancient texts, or current readings of characters in the colloquial language. However, it is clear that in *Shìmíng*, *dú yuē* 讀曰 refers to the colloquial language spoken in Qí and Lǔ. As we have seen pronunciations were very important for Liú Xī since there were the basis for his paronomastic glosses. He naturally presents onomatopoeia as another kind of motivation for word creation.

- Fā shēng 發聲 'onomatopoeia'

Liú Xī also introduces a few words that imitate the sounds with the original expression *fā shēng* 發聲:[44]

(12.163) 啜, 惙也. 心有所念, 惙然發此聲也 "*Chuò* is (paronomastically) associated with *chuò* 'sad'; when one worries, one sadly emits this sound."

(12.164) 嗟[45], 佐也. 言之不足以盡意, 故發此聲以自佐也 "*Jiè* 'sigh' is (paronomastically) associated with *zuǒ* 'help. When words are not sufficient to express fully meanings, one emits this sound as an aid."

(12.165) 噫, 憶也, 憶念之故發此聲意之也 "*Yī* is (paronomastically) associated with *yì* 'remember', when one recalls something, one emits this sound to mean it."

(12.166) 嗚, 舒也. 氣憤懣, 故發此聲以舒寫之也 "*Wū* 'alas' is (paronomastically) associated with *shū*, when one is depressed and discontented, one emits this sound to express (抒) it."

These are the four examples for which Liú Xī uses this technical term. Note that they are all written with the graphic constituent *kǒu* 口 'mouth'.[46] The device of adding the graphic constituent *kǒu* 口 'mouth' to represent an onomatopoeia or all sorts of sounds is also current in *Shuōwén jiĕzì*.[47]

All these formulae with *yán* 言 and *shēng* 聲 show Liú Xī's concern with the proper pronunciation of words as well as his interest in clarifying the way some words are articulated in different dialects. Here Liú Xī differs from Yáng Xióng 楊雄 who, in fact, gave in his *Fāngyán* the different ways to write words according to different dialects or regions. Liú Xī's approach shows a rather new phenomenon.

---

43 According to my own counting, there are more than 700 examples of *dú ruò* 讀若 and the like in the *Shuōwén*.

44 The *Hànyǔ dàcídiǎn* vol. 8: 575 does not provide this meaning for *fā shēng* 發聲.

45 According to Wáng Qǐyuán 王啟原, *jiè* 嗟 was probably pronounced like *cuó* 嵯 in ancient times, see Wáng Xiānqiān 1984: 200.

46 We note that these entries are treated differently in *Shuōwén*: 啜 嘗也 "*Chuò* is to taste" (2A 6a); 噫飽食息也 "*Yī* is to expel air after having eaten one's full > belch." (2A 6a); and *Wū* 嗚 is written without the mouth constituant.

47 There are about 10 such words under the radical mouth in *Shuōwén*: "*gū* 呱 'to weep': 小兒唬聲 onomatopeic for the sound of a baby crying." (2A 6a); *jiū* 啾 'baby's cry' (2A 6a), *náo* 呶 'to bawl' (2A 12b), etc.

Conclusion

Many other things could be said about the *Shìmíng*, but we have already enough material to see some of the particularities and the relevance of this text for the history of Chinese linguistics and Chinese lexicography.

Without being always coherent, Liú Xī tries his best to find ad hoc explanations for about 1500 words or expressions he discusses.[48] Using all sorts of terms, he introduces a wide range of glosses: lexical, encyclopaedic as well as graphically motivated glosses, but mostly he employs paronomastic glosses. As Wáng Lì has pointed out (1988: 49), what differentiates Liú Xī from other authors is that he uses this method in a linguistic perspective, and no longer for political ideology.[49]

One of Liú Xī's methodological contributions to the history of Chinese dictionaries is his effort in the direction of decontextualisation. In *Shìmíng*, like in *Shuōwén jiězì*, entries are detached from a text Liú Xī would be commenting on, and are presented in an organised way (27 sections). But compared with the other Hàn so-called dictionaries *Shuōwén jiězì* and *Fāngyán*, the *Shìmíng* is the only lexicographic work to deal essentially with words. Since Xǔ Shèn 許慎 focussed on the graphic etymology of characters and Yáng Xióng 楊雄 on the different ways to write words, both of them were in fact concerned with graphs. As Liú Xī pretends to retrieve the motivation at the basis of the creation of words, he is more concerned with words as such. Thus, he does not hesitate to refer to dialectal pronunciations. Where Xǔ Shèn persistently tried to answer why a word is written with the character that is used to write it, Liú Xī makes every effort to explain why things have the name they have.

Now, Liú Xī is not primarily preoccupied with the meaning of words in ancient texts, like most commentators of his time were, but he also focusses on their everyday use. He thus introduces many colloquial terms ('smile' *xiào* 笑, 'latrines' *cè* 廁, *hùn* 溷, *qīng* 圊 *xuān* 軒 (17.79), 'sesame seeds' *húmá* 胡麻, *yìniàn* 憶念 'to recall', *xièlì* 泄利(痢) 'dysentery', etc.,), "dialectal", disyllabic as well as compound words[50] (*pípa* 枇杷 'lute' (22.12), *màimù* 霢霂 'drizzle' (1.57) [51], *mōsuō* 摩娑, *mōshā* 末殺 'caress' (9.60), *guīsūn* 歸孫 'children of nephew or niece'[52] (11.34), *niúxīn* 牛心 'a kind of turban' (15.16), *yùlù* 玉輅 'the kings' chart' (24.2), *wūzhuó* 烏啄 'yoke for horses' (24.42), etc.). A lot of information on vocabulary related to writing, tombs, boats, charts, sickness, etc., around his time can be found in *Shìmíng*.[53]

---

48 For different kinds of mistakes in the *Shìmíng* see Guō Wénchāo 郭文超 2001: 42.

49 Like, for example, in *Lúnyǔ*: "Government consists in correcting" 政者正也 (*Lúnyǔ* 論語 Yán Yuān 顏淵 12·17/1); and in *Chūnqiū fánlù* 35 'Shēn chá mínghào' 深察名號, "Governing consists in adapting to circumstances" 君者權也 (Sù Xìng 蘇興, *Chūnqiū fánlù yìzhèng* 春秋繁露義證, Běijīng: Zhōnghuá shūjú, 1992: 290.

50 By disyllabic words I refer to binomes that can not be construed as combining the meaning of constituent parts (like, for example *pípa* 琵琶 here written 枇杷), as opposed to compounds which do.

51 See above note 15.

52 See also *Ěryǎ jīnzhù*, *Shì qīn* 釋親 4. 21 (Xú Zhāohuá 徐朝華, *Ěryǎ jīnzhù* 爾雅今注 [Modern annotations of the *Ěryǎ*], Tiānjīn: Nánkāi dàxué chūbǎnshè 南開大學出版社, 1994: 160).

53 In the *Sìkù quánshū zǒngmù* 四庫全書總目 (Běijīng: Zhōnghuá, vol 1, 1987: 340), it is said, for example, that it is thanks to the *Shìmíng* (18.27) that Wáng Yì's 王逸 commentary explaining *bó* 拍 as 搏壁

Liú Xī recognises moreover that different words can be written the same way with the formula A A 也, or that different words can refer to the same thing, not only between dialects, or different periods, but also in what may be called the 'standard language'.[54] At the same time, he recognises the polysemy of words.[55] If his (limited) use of graphs to show the motivation at the basis of the creation of some written words is a well-known method in ancient China, his interest for the pronunciation of spoken words is quite striking especially when he goes as far as referring to the way sounds should be articulated. The *Shìmíng* definitely sheds an unexpected light on Chinese autochtonous linguistics.
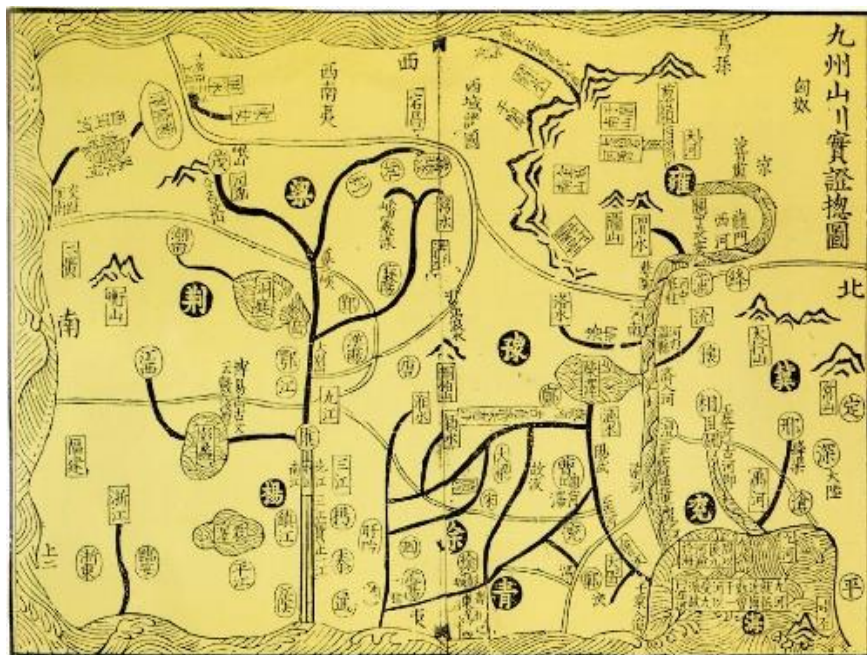
Map showing the location of the different 'dialect' quoted in *Shìmíng* (North on the right side) 九州 山川實證總圖 *The true general view of the landscape of the nine prefectures of China* from《禹貢山 川地理圖》*The geographical map of Yǔ gòng's landscape* (1177) (Běijīng's library).

也 in the sentence 薜荔拍兮蕙綢 from *Chùcí* 楚辭 *Jiǔ gē* 九歌 could be understood.

54 He provides, for example, the different ways to call one and the same reality: a 'boat' can be called *chuán* 船 or *zhōu* 舟 (25.1); a 'rafter' *jué* 桷, *chuán* 椽 or *cuī* 榱 (17.26); a 'rainbow' *hóng* 虹 or *dìdōng* 蝃蝀 (1.63); 'latrines', *cè* 廁, *hùn* 溷, *qīng* 圊 or *xuān* 軒 (17.79) (for references concerning the use of these four last words, see Wèi Yǔwén 魏宇文, Wáng Yànkūn 王彦坤, "*Shìmíng 'huǒyuē' shū zhèng*《釋名》"或曰"疏证", *Journal of Xiangtan University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences) 湘潭大学学 报(哲学社会科学版, 2006: 98), etc.

55 For example, he does not only define *wàng* 望 as 'to look at distance' in (9.29 and 12 .112, with slight nuances), but also notes a deviant use apparently referring to a kind of beam in (17.25), and discusses the 'full moon' meaning of *wàng* 望 separately in (1.73) (p. 13 above).