



REVIEW

Application of Exegetical Principles and Methods

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ABSTRACT

The interpretation of linguistic phenomena in ancient literature is called exegesis. Three rules should be followed in exegetical: time differences in meaning, specific context, and determine the structure of sentences. Moreover, three basic methods are supposed to employ in exegetical: pictogram exegesis, phono-semantic exegesis and compound ideographs exegesis. Knowing this will help us to understand more precisely of ancient literature interpretation.

1. Introduction

Many rhymes and difficult words in ancient documents are hard to understand, to better understanding those literature, we need learning, mastering and applying exegesis principles. The interpretation of linguistic phenomena in ancient literature is called exegesis.^[1]Predecessors summary the exegetical content by grammar, rhetorical expressions, sentence meanings, text structure, historical background, etc. in present study, we give a brief overview of exegetical principles and methods, To improve our ability to read ancient texts.

2. The Exegesis Principles

The exegetical principles are some basic rules that we

must strictly obey when interpreting ancient documents, it should follow three principles: confirming the differences of the particular era in meaning; obeying to a specific context; determine the sentence structure.

2.1 Chronological Differences

The literature exegeting cannot be separated from the era of document creation. The meaning of a particular word would change in different eras, therefore, to understand it accurately, we must go back to the era of literature. For example, *Zuozhuan•Zhengbo Beat Duan In Yan* said “If you do wrong, you will be fall down”(“多行不义必自毙”), Wangli’s book 《Classic Chinese》 interpreted the “bi(‘毙’)” as meaning of “fall down”, but why the meaning is “fall down” rather than “get shoot” that in

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modern meaning, That it because “*bi*(‘斃’)” in traditional Chinese Character writes as “*bi*(‘斃’)” , “Shuowen Jiezi · Dog Department” said “*bi*, fall down. The semantic component is dog, the pronunciation of characters is ‘*bi*’(敝). *Spring and autumn annals* said: Give it to the dog, The dog falls down.” “*bi*(‘斃’)” , “*bi*(‘斃’)” , The semantic component is ‘*si*’(die).” The origin meaning is “fall down”. “*bi*(‘斃’)” first wrote as “*bi*(‘斃’)” then wrote as “*bi*(‘斃’)” . *Zuozhuan* • *The fourth year of Xi Kong* recorded that Liji dedicated poisoned wine and meat to Jingxiangong. Jingxiangong offered up the wine to ground, the ground was blister, feed the meat to dog, dog fall down. There was only “fall down” meaning in ancient literature before Qin dynasty, the meaning of “death” appears in later eras. So “*bi*(‘斃’)” is a “latter word”, people use “*bi*(‘斃’)” instead of “*bi*(‘斃’)” after Han dynasty. The modern meaning of “*bi*”(“斃”) contain disrespectful attitude, shown as “get shoot”. When comparing “pre-Qin dynasty” and “double-Han dynasty”, the same writing shape but different meaning. Thus, it is necessary to pay attention to chronological differences when exegete.^[2]

Another example is the meaning of “*shen*(‘甚’)” in Pre-Qin Dynasties exegete as “*adj*, big or huge”. *Zhanguoce* • *Zhaoc* 4th said “*Does the husband love the young man? ‘She said, ‘more than the lady’*”(“丈夫亦爱怜少子夫?” 对曰: “甚于夫人”) . in Han Dynasties, *Jiayi's On Jizhushu* said “*There are few who live but many who die*”(“生之者甚少而靡之者甚多”). The meaning of both sentences is “*adv*, very or too”. The meaning of “*shen*(‘甚’)” changes when Han dynasty. A similar example is “*Shao*(‘稍’)” . the meaning of “*Shao*(‘稍’)” in Pre-Qin, Han and Wei Jin Dynasties exegete as “*adj*, gradually”, By the Tang Dynasties it extends the meaning of “slightly”.

As proved in examples, extra attention should be applied to the chronological discrepancy to get accurate meaning while exegete literature.

2.2 Specific Context

The ancient documents annotating should connect to context of article. One must contact the specific situation before the value of exegesis be revealed.

nth grade Yuwen in People's Education Press, 2002. The *Zuozhua* • *Cao Gui Polemic* • *The Tenth Year of ZhuangKong* mentioned “*Whatever Big or small Cases, Although can not be observed, will be love.*”(“小大之狱, 虽不能察, 必以情”), the character “*qing*”(“情”) in text interpreted as “reality”. Wangli's *Classic Chinese* annotated it as “situation”, These two annotations are basically the same. The “*qing*(‘情’)” in *Shuowen Jiezi* is “The will of the heart of the people, The semantic component

is “*xin*(‘心’)”, the pronunciation of characters is “*qing*(‘青’)”. The meaning should be understood as “sincerity”. The “*qing*(‘情’)” could be exegeted from “*xin*(‘心’)”. The meaning of “*qing*(‘情’)” as “reality, situation” or “sincerity”, the explanation as follows. The “*qing*(‘情’)” has radical of “*xin*(‘心’)”, which means “*qing*(‘情’)” derived from “*xin*(‘心’)”, the meaning is “desire and emotion”. Derived into the meaning of “sincerity”. Combine the context of sentence, “sincerity” explanation of “*qing*(‘情’)” should be correct. Regarding the annotation of the word “*qing*(‘情’)”, we found that to understanding of word meaning should be annotated in the context of the article.^[3]

Moreover, “*Jia*(‘假’)” is polysemy of “Pretend”, “informal, agency”, “draw support from”. The well-known sentence In *Xunzi's Encourage learning* that “*People who use boats are not good swimmers, but can cross the Yangtze River and Yellow River*”(“假舟楫者, 非能水也, 而绝江河”), in Chinese book for high school, People's Education Press. The “*Jia*(‘假’)” annotated as “with the help of”, the sentence means one ride horses can reach thousands of miles. In *Zuozhuan* • *XuanKong* 2th • *Jin linga-Kong* is't justice had “*Zhao Dun put on a dress ready to go to court, it is still early, He was sitting with his clothes on, taking an occasional nap*”(“盛服将朝, 尚早, 坐而假寐”), the “*Jia*(‘假’)” means “informal, agency”, It is an adjective that is also different in part of speech when compared with previous word. In summary, annotation must conform to the context of the article.

2.3 Sentence Structure

The sentence structure plays a key role in understanding the meaning of article.

Noted that the grammar structure has big discrepancy between the classic Chinese and the contemporary Chinese. In *LunYu* • *XiangDang* said that “*There was a fire in stable. Confucius backed from court and asked, ‘did you hurt anyone? ‘No question about the horse.*”(“厩焚。子还朝。曰: ‘伤人乎?’ 不问马”), In Tang dynasty *Lu Deming's Jingdianshiwen* said “Pause at the word ‘No’”. There are two possible reads, One is “*There was a fire in stable. Confucius backed from court and asked, ‘Does it hurt?’ Question about the horse.*”(“厩焚。子还朝。曰: ‘伤人乎不?’ 问马”), the other is “*There was a fire in stable. Confucius backed from court and asked, ‘Does it hurt?’ No. Question about the horse*”(“厩焚。子还朝。曰: ‘伤人乎?’ 不。问马”), Wang Ruoxu criticized it in *Huannan Yilao Ji* (Volume 5th). In fact, in *Ancient Chinese* there is no “Bu” in the interrogative mood word after the question sentence, also do not use as a word sentence to express negative. This is the

reason why *Lu Deming* did not understand the grammar.^[4] What is more, for sentence structure analysis of “*a snake bites a man, nothing can resist it*”(“以啮人，无御之者”), *Anthology of ancient prose* of People's Education Press mentioned “*A snake bites a man*”(“以啮人”) could annotated as “bite with this snake”, however, in *Selected works of Ancient Chinese literature*, the word “*Yi*(以)” annotated as “used, take or hold”, these two opinions treat “*Yi*(以)” as prepositional structure that object omission. However, in *Notes on selected poems and essays by Liu Zongyuan* of Liaoning people's press, regard “*Yi*(以)” as a hypothetical conjunction. Thus it seems reason able while interpretation “*Yi*(以)” as “if”. It can be seen that identifying the sentence structure helps to understand the meaning of sentence.^[5]

Therefore, reading ancient literature base on the above three principles of exegesis, helps to correctly understand the meaning of sentences in the literature. In fact, when reading ancient literature.

3. The Application of Exegesis Methods

“pictographically exegesis”, “sound exegeting” and “extension exegeting” are basis methods in exegetical.

3.1 Pictograms Exegesis

3.1.1 Pictograms Interpretation

Chinese pictograph stylized drawings of the objects they represent, Chinese characters pictograph highlighted the idea of character, pictographically exegesis means interpreting according the pictograph. There is also a close relationship between the shape and meaning of Chinese characters, thus we could interpret the meaning of ancient literature by pictographically method.

“*The prople of di'sent back his head*”(“狄人归其元”) in *Zuozhuan*•*The thirty-three year of Xi Kong*, the word “*Yuan*(元)” seems hard to understand. But it becomes more convenient to understand when interpret with pictograph way. The “*Yuan*(元)” was a deictic graph. From 《six principles theory of Chinese script》, the upper part of “*Yuan*(元)” is “*er*(二)”, which represented the bust, the lower part represented the people. So it is conclude that the “*Yuan*(元)” means “human head”. Interesting to mention that, The word “*Yuanshou*(元首)” is synonymous multiplexing, because “*Yuan*(元)” and “*Shou*(首)” both means “human head”.^[6]

3.1.2 Use of Captions

The description character mainly composes of ancient and modern forms and a variant way of writing. For example,

the “*turned , and back again*”(“辗转反侧”) from *Shijing*•*Zhounan*•*Guanju*, why not instead “*Zhanzhan*(展转)” of “*Zhanzhan*(展转)”. Actually, “*Zhan*(展)” is a modern word, while as “*Zhan*(展)” in ancient script form. The *Chenghuan*'s “*Maoshi*” interpreting of “*Shijing*” wrote that “*Zhan*”(“展”) origin from “*Zhan*”(“展”), the “*Zhan*(展)” means “opening and relax”, it is flat. On the other hand, “*Zhan*”(“展”) means wheel, rolling like tyre. “*Zhanzhan*(展转)” means human toss and turn. As it stand juxtaposed with “*Fance*(反侧)”.

Another example is “*There's such a thing as naked bugs*”(“有裸虫之孽”) from *Hanshu*•*Wuxingzhi*, the “*Luo*(裸)” is variant word of “*Luo*(羸)”. *GuangYun*, *Langguoqie*(郎果切), *JiYun*、*ZhengYun*, *Luguoqie*(鲁果切), pronunciation as “*Luan*(卵)”, means red body. “*Luochong*(裸虫)” means bare hoofs or hairless scales animals. *Yanshigu* annotated “*Luo*(裸)” as “*Luo*(羸)”, the two words are homophone graph. It was more clear after understanding they are variant words.^[7]

3.1.3 Deictic Word Regulation

Multiply deictic word regulation could be illustrated in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, such as “*Cuo*(错)” and “*Cuo*(措)”, “*Bian*(遍)” and “*Bian*(徧)”, “*Shuai*(帅)” as “*Shui*(税)”, they were made of convenience of readers. There are many types of characters in ancient script, “variant forms of a single graph” “standard and mistake graph” “proper graphic loans” “classical and colloquial language”, etc. readers will be confused without full understanding of deictic examples.

Pictograms interpretation, graph description and deictic are three methods of pictograms exegesis. However, sometimes pictograms exegesis might be so subject that have second meaning from person to person, so one is supposed to combine the others exegesis method.

3.2 Phono-semantic Exegesis

The original meaning and pronunciation are two basic elements that compose language, thus the principle of “phonological borrowing has similar meaning” could be applied to annotate sentences, this is called phono-semantic exegesis. In *Qianjia* times, *Wangniansun* and *Wangyinzhi* of “*GaoYou Er Wang*” applied the phono-semantic exegetical method and reach to the highest. As examples.

“*The weapons of equipment was corrupted*”(“甲兵顿弊”) from “*To teach tactics of combat and perseverance*”(《*教战守策*》) by *Sushi*, the “*dun*(顿)” is independent with the context, however, if loan phonetic from “*dun*(钝)”, which means blunt. “*The weapons of equipment was corrupted*”(“甲兵顿弊”) is a cognate of “*The weapon is not*”

flexible”(“甲兵钝弊”), means not preparing battle for a long time, the armor is broken, the weapon is rusty. As “*dun* (‘顿’)” phonological borrowing from “*dun* (‘钝’)”, the meaning is more reasonable after explication the context with phonological borrowing. Thus, similar pronunciation would be a clue for frequently reading sentence.

What about interpretation of “*you don't guard yourselves*” (“僭莫惩嗟”), “*Maoshi' interpreting of 'Shijing'*” Explained: “*Can* (‘僭’)” is “*Zeng* (‘曾’)”, It means to be “fter all”. What about interpretation of “*Zeng* (‘曾’)” and “*Can* (‘僭’)”, “*Can* (‘僭’)” is a word of “*Qing* (‘清’) *Initial 'Qin' radical*”(“清母侵部”), and “*Zeng* (‘曾’)” is a word of “*Qing* (‘清’) *Initial 'Yuan' radical*”(“精母蒸部”), They have the same initial, thus “*Zeng* (‘曾’)” is same as “*Zeng* (‘曾’)”, which means things that scattered, the words explained by double phonetic exegesis. In addition, phonetic exegesis including phonetic alteration and rhyme repetition. Combine these method help readers to understanding ancient script more easily.^[8]

Phonon-semantic exegesis is independent of pictograms exegesis, it depicts the nature of language, and closer to phonetics and word meaning. However, the ideographs exegesis provides the general definition of word, and will be illustrated in follow chapter.

3.3 Logical Exegesis of Meaning

The meaning of words changes with society development. There are two main aspect vocabulary eminent changes, one is the birth of new words and the decline of old words. Another is evolution of word meaning. Therefore, we trace the origin meaning of the word based on these two characteristics.

For example, *ChuCi-ZhaoHun* said “*The wildlings had black teeth carved into their foreheads, stripped human flesh for sacrifice, and ground their bones to make pulp*”(“雕题黑齿, 得人肉以祀, 以其骨为醢些”), and *Mengzi-Jinxinxia* wrote “*The height of the hall is several metres long, The eaves are several feet wide*”(“堂高数仞, 榱题数尺”), both sentences has the character of “*Ti* (‘题’)” one could speculate the meaning by pictograms exegesis and conclude “*Ti* (‘题’)” are connect to “*Ye* (‘页’)”, but it take the words too literally. So how could it be understood more correctly.^[9]

According to the research, the character “*Ti* (‘题’)” wrote in *xiao-chuan* is a portrait of human. Then, some semantic component character like “*Han* (‘颀’)” “*Xu* (‘頄’)” “*Ban* (‘颀’)” “*Jia* (‘頄’)” “*Dun* (‘顿’)” “*Qi* (‘颀’)” “*Yu* (‘颀’)” “*Gu* (‘颀’)”

“*Hang* (‘颀’)” “*Wang* (‘颀’)” “*Yan* (‘颀’)” could provide the “*Ti* (‘题’)” means “head”. thus the meaning of annotate of “*Ti* (‘题’)” in “*Patterned head, white teeth*” (“文题白身”) as “head”. Speculate the meaning from annotation is another method of exegetical. The meaning of “*Ti* (‘题’)” in “*The eaves are several feet wide*”(“榱题数尺”) could deduced from “head” and extent to “beam head”, “*Cui* (‘榱’)” means “eaves” while “*CuiTi* (‘榱题’)” means “the beam head of eaves”.^[9]

The combination of ideographs exegesis, phono-semantic exegesis and pictograms exegesis in exegetical make it possible for better understand literature.

The explain of ancient literature linguistic phenomena is exegetical. This paper reviewed principles and methods of exegetical and its application in reading. the vocabulary meanings change as chronological differences, the conforming of interpretation to specific contexts and the identifying sentence structure of annotation are three main principle in exegetical. Three methods includeing ideographs exegesis, phono-semantic exegesis and pictograms exegesis. Combine the principle and methods could help to understand correct meaning of ancient literature and exclusive the ability of reading ancient books.

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