

Foreword: Chronology as a Research Method

What happened and when? The appeal of chronology has long been evident through the extensive traditions of record-keeping and scholarly studies by both ancient annalists and contemporary historians. From early works such as the *Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu)* to modern chronicles and interpretations by scholars, there is an enduring interest in recording and associating events with specific dates. The notion of chronology offers a way to understand and organise historical narratives. Court historians, diarists, and scholars alike have long been captivated by the potential for timelines to reveal patterns and connections across time.

No chronological timelines, like any history, could offer a complete account of what happened in the historical past. However, what they do provide is a framework to approach a particular period and it is up to individuals to decide how to engage with such a framework. Chronology not only serves as a structuring tool; it also acts as a reflective lens through which the complexities of historical and literary landscapes can be examined.

In the graduate seminar on Research Methods that I teach at Oxford, I usually dedicate one session to discussing “Time, Chronology, and Periodisation” with students. This session serves two primary purposes. First, it equips students working on pre-modern China with essential skills for understanding and converting dates and times across various calendar systems. Second, it facilitates broader discussions on how time and chronology can be employed as effective tools for structuring research. This approach is partially influenced by my personal habit of examining events, authors, or incidents within their temporal context to discover what else occurred around the same time. This often leads to unexpected paths and new information beyond the original focus. In this way, exploring timelines and employing chronological methods can be indispensable tools for the curious researcher. Furthermore, delving deeper into specific years can illuminate broader historical contexts and narratives. This methodological framework not only enhances our understanding of the past but also enriches our engagement with historical texts.

Professor Song Lijuan’s book, *A Chronicle of Western Translations of Classical Chinese Fiction (1714-1911)*, demonstrates the use of *biannian* chronology as both a narrative and analytical tool. Covering nearly two centuries, this book presents events as part of a connected timeline rather than isolated incidents. The chronological structure allows for

a multi-layered interpretation of historical developments. This methodology moves beyond simple chronological listing to a deeper analysis of historical patterns and literary developments. Readers, including specialists and students of Chinese fiction, may benefit from reading this book in conjunction with her earlier monographs published in 2017 and 2022 on studies of classical Chinese Fiction and their early translations in the West. It also highlights the complementary nature of chronicles and research monographs.

I encourage readers to follow their own interests when reading this book to explore various levels of historical time through concepts such as events, conjunctions, and *longue durées*, as defined by the Annales school, or other temporal abstractions. Consider the year 1761, for example. As you will find in this book, this is a significant year marked by the publication of Thomas Percy's English translation of *Haoqiu zhuan*, titled *Hau KiouChooan or The Pleasing History*, in London. Additionally, through her cross-reference, Professor Song guides you to also look at the year 1719, when an earlier translation of the same work by James Wilkinson may be found. Moreover, Percy's 1761 translation in four volumes also includes other parts such as "I. The Argument or Story of a Chinese Play," "II. A Collection of Chinese Proverbs," and "III. Fragments of Chinese Poetry." It therefore represents an effort to capture aspects of Chinese literature and culture beyond the realm of fiction in mid eighteenth century, making it a significant document in both literary and translation history.

Several frameworks for potential comparisons and connections are available. I recommend that an inquisitive reader consider pairing Professor Song's *Chronicle* with another chronological history on another subject or with a different focus. For example, to gain more insight into the corresponding historical period in China, one can refer to various comprehensive chronological histories of Chinese history or literature, or specific volumes detailing the chronological developments of a particular literary genre. Such explorations need not be constrained by geographical or cultural boundaries. One might, alternatively, examine the same year via a volume such as *The Annual Register, or, a View of the History, Politicks, and Literature, of the Year 1761*, which was published with a significantly different purpose and target audience. It is notable, however, that both Percy's translation and the *Annual Register* of 1761 were published in London by the same publisher, R. and J. Dodsley in Pall Mall. Any overlaps (or lack thereof) between the two books will provide valuable insights. Such collateral readings invite us to contemplate various modes of cultural interactions and material exchanges occurring at that historical moment, including the

transmission of books between China and Europe, the transfer of knowledge across different linguistic mediums, or other aspects depending on the material being read.

About a decade ago, at the Beijing Forum 2014, I introduced the concept of “reciprocal gaze” as an approach towards reading pre-modern Chinese literature from cross-cultural perspectives. One potential inquiry could be: what other works of fiction or translations, in various languages and forms, were being produced concurrently in other literary cultures during the timelines addressed in this book? For instance, how might a researcher of Victorian literature or another early modern literary tradition interpret and utilise Professor Song’s *Chronicle*, in a manner similar to or different from a sinologist? It is therefore my hope that this book will appeal not only to scholars and students of sinology, but also to a wider readership, fostering reciprocal gazes from diverse perspectives.

Tan Tian Yuan 陳韞沅

University of Oxford

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序言：作为研究方法的编年法（温惠娟 中译）

历史长河中，有着怎样纷繁复杂的事件？它们究竟在何时发生？从古代编年史家到现代史学家，浩如烟海的记载与学术研究，无不彰显着编年法独特的吸引力。从古老的《春秋》等经典，到现代学者撰写的编年史及相关解读著作，人类对按日期记录事件始终保持着浓厚兴趣。编年法的理念，为理解和组织历史叙事提供了一种方法。宫廷史官、日记作者以及广大学者，向来热衷于以时间为轴，探寻历史事件间的关联与规律。

无论是编年体历史，还是其他类型的历史书写，都无法做到对过去特定时段历史的完整呈现。不过，它们所构建的框架，为我们接近特定时期提供了可能，至于如何运用这个框架，则取决于个人的思考与探索。编年法不仅是开展研究的结构化工具，更赋予我们一种反思的视角，让我们得以审视历史与文学景观中潜藏的复杂性。

在牛津大学为研究生讲授研究方法课程时，我总会专门安排一节课，聚焦“时间、编年法与历史分期”这一主题。我的教学目的有二：其一，帮助研究前现代中国的学生掌握基本技能，学会理解和转换不同日历系统下的日期与时间；其二，拓宽学生思路，引导他们探索如何将时间与编年法作为有效工具，构建自己的研究体系。我采用这种方法，部分源于个人习惯——将事件、作者或现象置于特定时间背景下考察，从而发现同时期发生的其他事件。这种方法常常能让我们跳出原有的关注点，发现意想不到的研究路径和新信息。因此，围绕时间轴线探索并运用编年法，无疑是渴望求知的研究者不可或缺的工具。此外，深入研究特定年份，还能揭示更广泛的历史背景与叙事脉络。这一方法论框架，不仅能加深我们对过去的认知，也有助于我们更好地理解与解读历史文本。

宋丽娟教授的著作《中国古典小说西译编年史（1714—1911）》，为我们展示了如何将编年法作为兼具叙述与分析功能的工具。本书将近两个世纪的事件视为时间轴线上相互关联的整体，而非孤立存在的片段，其编年结构为多层次解读历史演变提

供了有力支持。这一方法超越了简单的年代排序，深入剖析历史发展规律与文学演变趋势。对于包括中国小说研究者和学生在内的广大读者而言，若将本书与宋教授的 2017 年和 2022 年关于中国古典小说及其早期西译的专著结合阅读，或许能收获更多启发。这也进一步凸显了编年史与研究专著相互补充的特性。

我鼓励读者在阅读本书时，依据自身兴趣，借助事件、关联、年鉴学派所指的长时段或者其他时间抽象等概念展开思考，探索不同历史时段的不同层面。以 1761 年为例，您将在本书中看到，这一年意义重大——托马斯·帕西在伦敦出版了《好逑传》的英译本 *Hau Kiou Chooan or The Pleasing History*。经宋教授交叉考证，早在 1719 年，詹姆斯·威尔金森就已翻译过同一作品。此外，帕西 1761 年的四卷本译作，还收录了“I.一部中国戏剧的情节介绍”“II. 中国格言选辑”“III. 中国诗歌节选”等内容。因此，该书不仅关注小说，更致力于揭示 18 世纪中期中国文学与文化的多方面风貌，是文学和翻译史上的重要文献。

能拿来比较和关联的时间框架可不少。要是读者有探索的兴趣，我建议把宋教授的编年史，和另一部主题不一样或者侧重点不同的编年史对比着看。比如说，想深入了解中国相关历史时期的读者，可以去翻阅各类以中国历史或文学为主题的综合编年史，或者找聚焦某一特定文学体裁演变的编年史的具体卷册来读。这种探索不应受到地理或者文化边界的局限。

另外，我们还能借助像《1761 年年鉴：历史、政治与文学综述》这类出版目的和目标读者差异很大的文献，来对同一年份进行审视。特别要提的是，帕西的译本和 1761 年的《年鉴》，都是 Pall Mall 的 R.与 J.多兹利出版社出版的。二者之间的关联（或缺失关联）能给我们提供有价值的线索，帮助我们探索历史上的那一个时间段内文化互动和物质交流方面的不同模式，像中欧之间的书籍传播、跨语言媒介的知识转移或者因为阅读材料不同而引出的其他方面。

大约十年前，在 2014 年北京论坛上，我引入了“相互凝视”的概念，将其作为跨文化视角下阅读前现代中国文学的一种方法。另外，可能值得探讨的还有：在本书所涉及的时间轴线上，同一时期其他文学活动或实践中出现了哪些小说作品，以及形式和语言各异的译本？例如，维多利亚文学研究者或其他早期现代文学传统学者，会以

何种方式诠释和利用宋教授的《中国古典小说西译编年史（1714—1911）》，其方法与汉学家有何异同？

因此，我期望这本书不仅能吸引汉学领域的学者和学生，还能吸引更多广泛的读者群体，推动多方面的“相互凝视”。

陈韞沅

牛津大学

二零二五年二月