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A good son is sad if he hears the name of his father : the tabooing of names in China as a way of implementing social values

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Citation

Adamek, P. (2012, September 11). *A good son is sad if he hears the name of his father : the tabooing of names in China as a way of implementing social values*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/19770>

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Date: 2012-09-11

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Reading about the history of China, one finds many stories of people's lives. Some of them are amusing, others are tragic. There is for example the comic story about the minister and teacher Feng Dao 馮道 (882–954) living in the period of Five Dynasties. He was teaching the *Daodejing* to his students, including the famous first line: “The Dao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Dao” (*dao ke dao fei chang dao* 道可道非常道).¹ Yet the students did not dare to read the character *dao* aloud, as it was the name of their teacher. Every time they had to read the sentence, they read it as: “‘Not dare to say’ that can be ‘Not dare to say’ is not the enduring and unchanging ‘Not dare to say’” (*bukan shuo ke bukan shuo fei chang bukan shuo* 不敢说可不敢说, 非常不敢说).² The example is also interesting because of its information on learning practice.

Two other stories about Xu Ji 徐積 (1028–1103) and Liu Wensou 劉溫叟 (909–971) come from the Song period. The father of Xu Ji had the name Shi 石 and the father of Liu Wensou the name Yue 岳. The names of these fathers meant “stone” (*shi*) and “high mountains” (*yue*), which affected their sons for their entire lives. The first one never used stone tools in his life, and had to pay extraordinary attention when walking, in order not to step on stones. Once, as he happened upon a stone bridge on his way, he had to ask other people to carry him across the bridge on their back.³ Liu Wensou, on the other hand, never hiked in the mountains all his life. Moreover, he could never listen to the music, because the word for “music” (*yue* 樂) sounded like the word for “high mountains”.⁴ Even if such stories may be partly apocryphal, they do illustrate the enormous impact that was ascribed to name taboos.

Some stories are tragic, as shown by the following example of Wang Xihou 王錫侯 (1713–1777), a scholar from Jiangxi. In 1775, he compiled a dictionary, called *Ziguan* 字貫. In the introduction to it, he wrote, for illustrative purposes, the personal names of Confucius and three emperors: Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong. In oversight, he wrote

¹ *Daodejing*, j. 1, p. 1. For translation see Legge 1963, p. 95.

² Probably the story was recorded first in *Leishuo*, j. 49, p. 3225, of Zeng Zao 曾慥 (d. ca. 1160). The story can also be found in *Tianzhongji*, j. 24, p. 29 of Chen Yaowen 陳耀文 (16 c.) and in *Wuzazu*, j. 16, p. 3, of Xie Zhaozhi 謝肇淛 (1567–1624), as well as in later works. Another possible translation of the sentence: “‘Not dare to say’ that can be ‘Not dare to say’ is very ‘Not dare to say’.”

³ *Bishu luhua*, j. 2, pp. 65–66 by Ye Mengde 葉夢得 (1077–1147).

⁴ *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, p. 44, by Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298). See also Ma Yifan 2008, pp. 103–104; Ma Yifan 2008a, p. 63.

their complete names. When he realized it, he cut the names from the printing blocks, but a number of unexpurgated copies had already passed into circulation. This accidental writing of a few names cost him his life. It was condemned by Emperor Qianlong as an unprecedented crime, rebellion and high treason. Wang Xihou was executed on December 27, 1777. His property was confiscated and his books were burnt. His family was arrested and his sons and grandsons were killed or sent as slaves to Heilongjiang. The governor and a few officials of Jiangxi province were dismissed.⁵ This happened during the heyday of the so-called Literary Inquisition, a period of intense scrutiny of publications for any possible form of conscious or (most of the time) unconscious written criticism of the Qing dynasty and its Manchu origins.⁶

No less tragic is the story, predating the former by fifty years, that recounts the life of an official from Zhejiang province, Zha Siting 查嗣庭 (1664–1727), who was sent to conduct examinations for the *juren*-degree (舉人 “recommended man”) in Jiangxi province during the reign of the Yongzheng 雍正 emperor. In 1726, he confirmed the following verse of the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*): “(The royal domain of a thousand *li*) is where the people rest” (*wei min suo zhi* 維民所止)⁷ as the topic of the examination essay. Yet somebody realized that the characters *wei* 維 and *zhi* 止 of the sentence resembled the name of the Emperor but missing the top part, in other words being “decapitated” characters. The emperor was furious and ordered the arrest of Zha Siting, who soon fell ill and died in prison. His corpse was dismembered and displayed in public. His two elder brothers were imprisoned and his wife exiled. A special imperial decree suspended provincial examinations in Zhejiang for a few years.⁸ His fate is not entirely surprising, since the Yongzheng emperor had come to the throne only recently and there were rumours that he had acquired the throne in an irregular way. He would therefore have been extremely sensitive on this issue.⁹

⁵ *Donghua xulu* “Qianlong chao 乾隆朝”, j. 86, p. 11, by Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1917). See also Hummel 1943, pp. 819–820. One more accusation was that the names of the emperors were written after the name of Confucius.

⁶ More about the Literary Inquisition see Guy 1987.

⁷ *Shijing*, j. 21, p. 13. For an English translation see James Legge 1966, p. 637. Hummel (1943, p. 22) gives *Daxue* as the source of the quotation, which, however, reads (with reference to *Shijing*): *wei min suo zhi* 惟民所止, having the character *wei* 惟 in place of *wei* 維, cf. *Daxue*, j. 3, p. 3. For the English translation of *Daxue* see Legge 1970, p. 317.

⁸ *Huaiting zaibi*, j. 13, pp. 4–5 of Fa Shishan 法式善 (1753–1813). About the case see also Hummel 1943, p. 22; Goodrich 1966, pp. 80–81. For Zha Siting see *Zhongguo renming da cidian* 1964, p. 656.

⁹ About Yongzheng see also ter Haar 2009, pp. 435–480.

There are many curious and tragic stories in the history of China that have as their common denominator a taboo name that affected people's lives and sometimes even brought death. Thus, the practice of tabooing names in China affected and determined social values for centuries and was important for commoners and emperors alike. It was considered an important part of social and political culture. But why was the tabooing of names so important that ignoring tabooed characters could even result in capital punishment? What do we actually know about the tabooing of names in China?

In the following, we will try to answer these and other questions connected with the fascinating topic of tabooing of names.

1.1. Subject Matter

This dissertation deals with the tabooing of names in China, which is called *bihui* 避諱 in Chinese. The names of sovereigns, gods, holy men, ancestors, officials, teachers, friends, etc. were all considered taboo, in other words it was prohibited to pronounce them or to record them in writing. Furthermore, because of the specific features of the Chinese language, characters identical or similar in writing or pronunciation were often avoided as well.

It is surprising what an enormous impact *bihui* had on Chinese culture. The tabooing of names was observed in the family and on the street, in the office and in the emperor's palace. The practice of *bihui* had serious consequences for the lives of the Chinese and for Chinese historiography. It resulted in the changing of thousands of personal names, official titles, geographical names and so forth, but also of the names of plants and things, common expressions, and even the Heavenly Stems—characters that are used in the Chinese system of dating days, months and years.¹⁰ People avoided certain places and things, and they refused to accept offices. They were punished and sometimes even killed in connection with the tabooing of names. Old texts were “improved”, old meanings changed and forgotten.

The tabooing of names was not a short-lived phenomenon in the history of China. It was present in just about every period. The first written evidence of *bihui* that we have probably comes from the time of Western Zhou (1046-771 BC). However the tabooing of names was not only a written, but also an oral custom (see 3.3.1.4), and it is likely that the

¹⁰ Cihai 2009, p. 502. The Ten Heavenly or Celestial Stems are *jia* 甲, *yi* 乙, *bing* 丙, *ding* 丁, *wu* 戊, *ji* 己, *geng* 庚, *xin* 辛, *ren* 壬, *gui* 癸. No case of tabooing of characters of the Earthly Branches (*dizhi* 地支) could be discovered.

practice is much older and goes back to the language taboos of prehistoric China. The custom persisted throughout the imperial period, from the Qin dynasty founded in 221 BC and ending with the abdication of the last Qing emperor in 1912, with a peak in the Song period (960-1279). After the last Chinese emperor was forced to abdicate and the Republic was established in 1912, the practice of tabooing names slowly became less prevalent, though it is still not entirely extinguished.

In its long history, numerous changes took place in the tabooing of names. Various methods were used in different periods to avoid taboo names or characters, such as a change of pronunciation, changes in the way of writing a character, just leaving an empty space, masking it with a piece of yellow paper, etc. A complex system of rules was created in order to take the strain of and to avoid exaggerated tabooing. It was determined by whom, when and where a taboo had to be observed or not. *Bihui* was an expression of courtesy and respect, fear and anger, legitimization of power and religious protection.

Tabooing of names is a worldwide phenomenon which can be seen in many cultures on every continent. For example the name of God (YHWH) was taboo for Jews,¹¹ and numerous other examples of taboos on names of relatives, the deceased, kings and sacred persons can be found for instance in old Egypt¹² and Rome,¹³ as well as among the Aborigines in Australia.¹⁴ However, because of the specific nature of the Chinese writing system and the length of this cultural tradition, the *bihui* of China was very particular and it is hard to find any other nation having such an elaborate system of name taboos.

The taboo custom existed as an important element of Chinese culture and was perceived as significant by Chinese and foreigners alike (for examples of tabooing in Korea and Japan, see 9.5). The tabooing of names was used for implementing social values and demonstrating the political hierarchy. The status of a human being in society was given a “material” expression through the taboo of his name. Rulers struggled for the maintenance of the taboos of their names as a very important affirmation of their legitimacy. A name was considered the essence (“soul”) of a human being, and the tabooing of names was seen as the centre (“heart”) of culture, i.e., of the norms and values which structure the society.¹⁵

¹¹ See Van Imschoot 1968, p. 796-798.

¹² Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 304. The most powerful name for a god in Egypt was his secret name.

¹³ Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 304. Romans preserved secret lists of divine names.

¹⁴ Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 303, 306. The high god's names were closely guarded secrets, known only to the initiated males of high status. A person's secret name was never uttered beyond the ritual setting.

¹⁵ Burszta 2010, p. 6. The author quotes the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski (1928–2009), who wrote: “... Culture is taboos or, to put it another way, a culture without taboos is a square circle.” See

Chinese culture cannot be contemplated without the tabooing of names, as a crucial expression of the way in which social values were implemented and expressed.

1.2. Terminology

This section will map out the basic terminology and concepts around name tabooing, as encountered in Chinese and Western literature. It is necessary to define our terms and to point out the specific ways in which terms such as “taboo” in our analysis of Chinese name tabooing will be used. The reader who is less interested in such issues may of course skip this section.

Western terminology

The term “taboo” is one of the basic concepts of ethnology. In modern ethnology it is defined as: “a social prohibition or restriction sanctioned by suprasocietal (innate) means or a socially sanctioned injunction alleged to have the force of such a prohibition (...) at the intersection of human affairs and the forces of the larger universe.”¹⁶ A more elaborate and systematic characterization of the concept of taboo in general and in China will be made in the next chapter (see 2.1). Here it is important to point out that the concept of taboo is very wide and describes many kinds of prohibitions in every culture with, of course, contextual differences in every case. It has to be considered that the cultural and religious context of China (for example, the question of suprasocietal authority) makes Chinese taboo specific. Nevertheless, the use of such a general term helps us to see connections with other civilizations and is useful today. The Western concept of taboo covers such Chinese concepts as *bihui* 避諱, *jinji* 禁忌 and *jihui* 忌諱.

There is a special kind of (language) taboo, called “name taboo.” It is connected with the names of men or ghosts, and can be observed in many cultures. It includes “naming taboo”, i.e., taboos involved in the process of selecting a new name at birth or even later in life, in other words specific rules which names cannot be used. But there are also names (words or characters) which became taboo in other circumstances, for example when a new ruler was installed (see 5.4.2) or a girl was married into a new family (see 6.4.2).

Kołakowski 1993, p. 186.

¹⁶ Wagner 1987, p. 233.

Probably the best Western term corresponding to the Chinese term *bihui* is “tabooing of name” (or “name tabooing”), which will be used in this dissertation. This term will be used to refer to the whole range of “name taboo,” its evolution and context. This includes customs related to spoken and written names, and includes the power of names and the context of their avoidance. Possible variations in the understanding of the term will be explained in concrete cases. Below I will discuss in more detail possible ambiguities of meaning between the Chinese and English expression for taboo, including name taboo, just as we find them in many other “intercultural concepts” (for example, in conceptual pairs such as *zongjiao* 宗教 and religion, or Confucianism and *rujia* 儒家, where the Chinese and English terms do not perfectly coincide with each other).¹⁷ Therefore the term “tabooing of name” should also be used with reservation.

The Chinese idea of *bihui* as “the avoidance of names” is a direct translation of the term without the burden of historical connections (as, for example, the term “taboo”) and can serve as a neutral expression for our topic. It expresses, however, only one important aspect of *bihui*. Apart from avoiding names, *bihui* also includes other cases of taboo. There are, for example, instances of intentionally breaking taboos (see 4.4.6), invoking the powerful taboo name of ghosts in order to control them (see 1.2.3) or using inauspicious characters to harm people (6.1.3). The term “avoiding” or “avoidance of names” does not express the deeper background of *bihui* as a specific cultural practice, with its rich connotations in the Chinese context. Because the term “taboo” has been long established in Western scholarship, we will still use this term in this dissertation, despite the fact that this will introduce some spill-over from other fields of study.

Concealment and euphemism are methods specifically used in Chinese historiography for protecting or punishing one person. The record of a name or description of a situation can be intentionally omitted (concealed) or denoted in other indirect words (euphemism). These methods are also related to *bihui*. They are, however, not necessarily a case of name tabooing. Concrete examples of concealment and euphemism will be described later (see 3.3.1).¹⁸

¹⁷ For discussion about “terminology transfers” see Thoraval 1996, pp. 58-61. About the concept of “religion” in China see, for instance, Feuchtwang 2010, pp. 11-28; Feuchtwang 1989, pp. 43-44; Ching 1993, pp. 1-3. For concepts of Confucianism and *ru* see Jensen 1997, esp. pp. 137-147, 154-181.

¹⁸ For more about concealment and euphemism in Chinese historiography see Emmrich 1992, pp. 36-46.

Different terms can be used in the western terminology for the phenomenon of Chinese *bihui*. The term “tabooing of names”, despite of its connotations, seems to be the best expression for the diversity of the topic.

Chinese terminology

With regard to *bihui* 避諱, three different connotations are known: a. “to keep something in secret, to conceal, to deflect” (*huibi* 迴避, *taobi* 逃避, *yinhui* 隱諱); b. “the avoidance of an unpleasant situation, or of inauspicious characters and words”; and c. the concrete narrow (perhaps original) sense of “tabooing names of persons deserving respect.”¹⁹ If it is not explicitly stated, we use *bihui* only in the third meaning.

The character *bi* 避 can be found already in the oracle inscriptions as 𠄎, where it denotes the name of a person (subject of a king) or the name of a state.²⁰ In early texts such as the *Mencius* (*Mengzi*) or *Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu*) etc. it means: “to abandon, to deflect, to counteract, to offend, to refuse politely, to obviate.”²¹ It can be found in such compositions as: *biji* 避忌 (taboo), *bixiefu* 避邪符 (amulet to avoid evil), *bixiong* 避凶 (to avoid calamity).

The character *hui* 諱 was recorded from the Western Zhou on bronze vessels as 諱 and means: “to go astray, to make a mistake.” In the Eastern Zhou (772-221 BC) it was written as 諱 and the meaning was already: “to be filled with fear, hesitate, to be disobedient”, for instance in the phrase *buhui* 不諱 – “to be deprived of longevity.”²² We find this character in the ancient texts such as the *Tradition of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*) (“not to speak, to keep silent, to conceal”), *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli*) (as a posthumous name of ancient sovereigns which is prohibited), *Mozi* (“to avoid, to evade”), *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*: “not to pronounce a taboo name, the taboo name”). Similar meanings of *hui* can be found in *Chuci* (“to conceal”).²³ There are many possible compositions in which the character *hui* is used, such as *fanhui* 犯諱 (“to violate a taboo”), *yinhui* 隱諱 (“taboo”), *huicheng* 諱稱 (“the avoided name of a dead or of a respected person”), *huibing* 諱病 (“to conceal a

¹⁹ Cf. *Xiandai Hanyu cidian* 2005, p. 65; Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 1-2; Wang Yankun 1997, p. 1; Fan Zhixin, p.1.

²⁰ *Jiaguwen zidian* 1988, pp. 156-157.

²¹ Cf. for example *Mengzi*, j. 2, p. 14; *Guoyu*, j. 1, p. 1. See also *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 10, p. 1267; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 4, pp. 997-998.

²² *Jinwen dazidian* 1999, p. 4367; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 3, p. 244.

²³ Cf. *Zuozhuan*, j. 5, p. 16; *Zhouli*, j. 6, p. 43; *Mozi*, j. 9, p. 2; *Liji*, j. 1, pp. 38-40; *Chuci*, j. 6, p. 2. See also *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 11, p. 357.

malady”), *huizi* 諱字 and *huiyan* 諱言 (both meaning “to avoid a character or mentioning”), *huishi* 諱飾 (“to mask, to disguise”). There are also many character combinations connected with every kind of taboo. The expression *bihui* 避諱 was probably first used in Han times in the work *Huainanzi*, in the meaning of a common taboo without direct connection to naming practices.²⁴

An important word used in the context we are concerned with here is *jinji* 禁忌. It is the most frequently used Chinese word for taboo, defined in the 1999 edition of the *Sea of Words (Cihai)* dictionary as: “Men or things prohibited from coming into contact with common people, as well as taboo (*jihui* 忌諱) terms, words and actions.”²⁵ The character *jin* 禁 is not known in oracle or bronze inscriptions. It appears in works such as the *Han Feizi* or *Records of Ritual (Liji)* in the meaning of “interdiction, prohibition, secret, imperial domain, to abandon, fear of God, to exorcise.”²⁶ In contrast, the character *ji* 忌, which appears in bronze inscriptions as 𠄎 or 𠄏,²⁷ has the meaning “to envy, to hate, to fear, to venerate, anniversary of death (especially of king or parents), the seventh day after death” in works such as the *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)*, *Classic of Documents (Shangshu)* and *Zhou Changes (Zhouyi)*.²⁸ Possible compositions are: *jihui* 忌諱, *jibi* 忌避. Also interesting are the words *jixin* 忌心 (“envy” – note that the character *xin* 心 – heart, feeling – does not appear together with *jin* 禁), *jichen* 忌辰 (“anniversary of the death of emperor or of parents, as a day when wine and affairs have to be avoided”),²⁹ *jiri* 忌日 (“taboo day”) and *jiyue* 忌月 (“taboo month”). The last two combinations have a special meaning in Buddhism as taboo days or months.³⁰ Similar in meaning to the character *ji* 忌 is the character *ji* 忌, which can be found in the bronze inscriptions of the Eastern Zhou as 𠄎 (“to be full of fear and respect”)³¹ and in *Huainanzi* (as “to alert”).³² It is also translated as “sincere” or “taboo.”³³ *Jin* 禁 and *ji* 忌 appear separately in early Chinese texts, but from the Eastern

²⁴ *Huainanzi*, j. 21, p. 4.

²⁵ *Cihai* 1999, p. 849.

²⁶ *Han Feizi*, j. 1, p. 10; *Liji*, j. 1, p. 40. See also *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 7, pp. 919–920; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 1035–1038.

²⁷ *Jinwen dazidian* 1999, p. 1818; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 447.

²⁸ *Shijing*, j. 1, p. 8; *Shangshu*, j. 6, p. 59b; *Zhouyi*, j. 5, p. 1. See also *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 7, p. 406; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 447–448.

²⁹ Cf. *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 447–448.

³⁰ *Foxue dacidian* 1961, Vol. 2, p. 1118.

³¹ According to *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 501.

³² *Huainanzi*, j. 10, p. 3.

³³ Cf. *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 11, p. 251; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 501.

Han period onwards they also appear together (for instance in the *Book of the Han – Hanshu* – the history of the Western Han that was written in the early Eastern Han).³⁴ Yet there was still a difference in meaning between the two words. *Jin* denotes the intervention of external (usually supernatural) power and is associated with a ruler (in society) or a deity (in the religion). *Ji* is a subjective sense (emotion) of interdiction of an activity. Hence *jin* had also an exorcistic meaning and *ji* did not.³⁵ The combination *jinji* expresses the merging of collective (social and religious) restrictions for the individual and his own psychological and emotional limitations.

Another term used in Chinese for “taboo” is *jihui* 忌諱. Both characters (*ji* and *hui*) were already used together in the *Rites of Zhou (Zhouli)*, where *ji* means the “day of death of former kings,” and *hui* refers to their taboo names.³⁶ The word *jihui* is similar to *jinji*, and is often used as its equivalent. The difference lies in the emphasis of prohibition. *Jihui* is used especially for describing local customs and restrictions and we will not use it very often in this study.³⁷

One more term connected with “taboo” is *jie* 戒. It can be found already in the oracle inscriptions as two hands with a halberd 𠄎, where it means “to perform the *jie* sacrifice.”³⁸ In the bronze inscriptions of the Eastern Zhou it denotes “to be vigilant.”³⁹ In texts such as *Classic of Changes (Yijing)*, *Classic of Documents (Shangshu)*, *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)*, *Analects (Lunyu)*, *Mengzi* it means “to be attentive, to protect against a danger, to prepare for a ceremony through abstinence.”⁴⁰ Later the term *jie* or *jielü* 戒律 was also used in Buddhism as a translation of Sanskrit word *śīla* (“ethical rules of Buddhist life, natural moral behaviour pattern as opposed to monastic rules”).⁴¹ There are many precepts (*jie*) in Buddhism, but none of them has a connection with the tabooing of name. However, in the Buddhist initiation ritual a new name is acquired, which is called *jieming* 戒名 (“Dharma name”), also known as *faming* 法名, *fahao* 法號, or *fahui* 法諱 (see 9.2.2).

³⁴ *Hanshu*, j. 30, p. 19.

³⁵ For exorcistic practices see Poo Mu-chou 1998, pp. 52-53.

³⁶ *Zhouli*, j. 6, p. 43.

³⁷ We can say that “*ji* is the same as *hui*, but *jin* is not the same as *hui*” (Ren Cheng 2004, p. 5). Cf. also the differentiation of taboo terms in the *Liji*: “If you enter one state, you should ask about *jin*, if you enter one county, you should ask about *su* 俗 (customs), if you enter one house, you should ask about *hui*” (*Liji*, j. 1, p. 40).

³⁸ *Jiaguwen zidian* 1988, p. 239.

³⁹ *Jinwen dazidian* 1999, p. 1906; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 746.

⁴⁰ *Zhouyi*, j. 2, pp. 1-2; *Shangshu*, j. 1, p. 26a, *Shijing*, j. 1, p. 2, *Lunyu*, j. 16, p. 5, *Mengzi*, j. 2, p. 8.

⁴¹ *Foxue dacidian* 1961, Vol. 2, pp. 1107-1108 ; *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* 1937, p. 239; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 746.

In Daoism the character *jie* also denotes precepts for daily life and ritual rules.⁴² The character *jie* also appears in general terms in combinations such as *jieji* 戒忌 (“to abstain, to beware”), *jiexin* 戒心 (“to be watchful, vigilant”) and *jiayan* 戒言 (“injunctions, precepts”).⁴³

In order to avoid the different connotations between Chinese and Western terms, Chinese scholars sometimes use the Chinese transcription of the English word “taboo” (which was originally a Polynesian term): *tabu* 塔怖 or 塔布. The difference between Chinese *jinji* and Western “taboo” seems to be, however, primarily historical, as they both are labels for customs and practices that may vary widely between different cultures. Some Chinese scholars in religious studies point out that in the beginning, the Western concept of taboo meant only spiritual power (*mana*) and did not include impurity.⁴⁴ Only later did it grow into the general term which can be considered more or less identical to the present Chinese term *jinji*. However, Chinese scholars in folklore studies regard “taboo” and *jinji* as synonyms, pointing out that there was no distinction between the “sacral” and the “impure” in the Chinese past.⁴⁵

1.3. State of the Field in Taboo Studies

Writing on *bihui* has a long tradition in China, starting from the Han dynasty. Tools such as lists of taboos, depiction of rules, examples of tabooing and discussion about related problems were created in order to clarify and define the practice of tabooing names and to help people in carrying out the taboos. The first known descriptions and rules for tabooing names can be found in the *Tradition of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*) and *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*, see 3.3.1). Taboo clauses were present also in many imperial decrees since the Han dynasty (see 4.1.1 and 4.2.2. for the Han). Many examples of taboo can be found in the Standard Histories (*zhengshi* 正史, see, for example, 4.1.1). The first works dealing explicitly with name taboos were collections and lists of existing taboos (see 4.4.2). They show how important the knowledge about names and their taboo already was at an early stage of Chinese history. The earliest larger work specifically dealing with *bihui* seems to be *Taboo Names of Former Rulers* (*Jiujun minghui* 舊君名諱) written by Ying Shao 應劭 (2 c. AD)

⁴² *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian* 1995, p. 564. More about *jie*, *jin* and *ji* as kinds of precepts in Daoism see Kohn 2004, pp. 2-4.

⁴³ Cf. *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 5, pp. 206-207; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 746-747.

⁴⁴ About the relation between *mana* and “taboo,” and their inseparability see: Greschat 1992, pp. 13-16.

⁴⁵ Ren Cheng 2004, p. 3-4.

during the period of Eastern Han time.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, this work has been lost, in addition to two other works of the first millennium, *Explanation of Taboo* (*Shihui* 釋諱) written by Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297) in the Jin era,⁴⁷ and *Outline of Taboos* (*Huixinglüe* 諱行略) written by an unknown author during the Tang dynasty.⁴⁸ An extensive search has failed to find any quotations from these three works by subsequent authors. They were probably lists of dynastic taboos (so-called *huipu* 諱譜).

The first extant detailed comments on *bihui* originate from the Song period. There are chapters or subchapters of works dealing with taboos of successive dynasties, as for example in *Tolerant Study Notebooks* (*Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆) by Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123–1202),⁴⁹ in *Collection by a Villager* (*Yeke congshu* 野客叢書) of Wang Mao 王楙 (1151–1213),⁵⁰ in *Forest of Learning* (*Xuelin* 學林) of Wang Guanguo 王觀國 (12 c.),⁵¹ and in *Rustic Words of a Man from Eastern Qi* (*Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語) of Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298).⁵² The custom of name tabooing is also discussed briefly in this period by Peng Shuxia 彭叔夏 in *Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature* (*Wenyuan yinghua bianzheng* 文苑英華辨證),⁵³ Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) in *Ancient Prose Key* (*Guwen guanjian* 古文關鍵),⁵⁴ Yue Ke 岳珂 (1183–1243) in *Records of Kui Tan* (*Kui Tan lu* 媿鄰錄),⁵⁵ Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (962–1025) in his encyclopedia *Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature* (*Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜). The last book lists taboo names of emperors of former dynasties⁵⁶ and mentions a few rules and examples of tabooing.⁵⁷ Larger works of the Song period, such as: Song Minqiu's 宋敏求 (1019–1079) *Later Records About Taboo Practice* (*Huixing houlu* 諱行後錄) in five *juan*,⁵⁸ and Li Chun's 李椿 *Restoration of Civil Exams*

⁴⁶ According to *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 3, p. 66. The work is first listed as *Runan junhuiyi* 汝南君諱議 in *Suishu*, j. 33, p. 8. Runan (today in Hunan province) is the home county of Ying Shao. About Ying Shao see Loewe 1993, p. 105.

⁴⁷ See *Huayang guozhi*, j. 11, p. 7, written also in the Jin period by Chang Ju 常璩 (291–361). The work is mentioned there in the biography of Chen Shou.

⁴⁸ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 3, p. 66. The work is listed as *Huixinglu* 諱行錄 in *Xin Tangshu*, j. 58, p. 16 and in *Songshi*, j. 203, p. 12.

⁴⁹ *Rongzhai suibi*, j. 4, p. 49; j. 9, p. 123; j. 11, p. 142.

⁵⁰ *Yeke congshu*, j. 5, p. 44; j. 9, p. 83; j. 19, pp. 191–192.

⁵¹ *Xuelin*, j. 3, pp. 67–70.

⁵² *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, pp. 39–45.

⁵³ *Wenyuan yinghua bianzheng*, j. 8, pp. 54–55.

⁵⁴ *Guwen guanjian*, j. 1, pp. 16–18.

⁵⁵ *Kui Tan lu*, j. 2, pp. 3–5.

⁵⁶ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, pp. 6–17.

⁵⁷ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 31, pp. 15–19; j. 182, pp. 16–21.

⁵⁸ Recorded in *Songshi*, j. 203, p. 13.

(*Zhongxing dengke xiaolu* 中興登科小錄) in three *juan*⁵⁹ are sadly lost. No works of authors from the Yuan and Ming periods dealing with tabooing of names were discovered in the course of this study.

The writing on name tabooing was continued in the Qing dynasty. A few works are known from that period, such as Lu Feichi's 陸費墀 (1731–1790) *Register of Emperors' Temple, Posthumous, Era and Taboo Names* (*Lidai diwang miaoshi nianhui pu* 歷代帝王廟諡年諱譜) in one *juan*, Huang Benji's 黃本驥 (1781–1856) *Register of Taboo Names* (*Bihui lu* 避諱錄) in five *juan*, and Zhou Ju's 周槩 *Outline of Taboo Names in Twenty Two Standard Histories* (*Nianer shihuilue* 廿二史諱略). In addition to the list of name taboos of past dynasties, these works gave examples of their avoidance in the past, too. But as Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1880–1971) already noted, “these three books came from the same source (*Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語), gave no quotations, had a large amount of mistakes and cannot be a foundation for further research.”⁶⁰ Specialized discussion of *bihui* can be found in works of some historians of that time, such as Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) in *Record of Knowledge Gained Day by Day* (*Rizhi lu* 日知錄),⁶¹ Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814) in *Miscellaneous Notes from my Mourning Period* (*Gaiyu congkao* 陔餘叢考),⁶² Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛 (1722–1798) in *A Critical Study of the Seventeen Histories* (*Shiqi shi shangque* 十七史商榷),⁶³ Wang Chang 王昶 (1724–1806) in *Collection of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions* (*Jinshi cuibian* 金石萃編)⁶⁴ or Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804) in *Record of Self-renewal from the Ten Yokes Study* (*Shijiazhai yangxin lu* 十駕齋養新錄).⁶⁵ The latter was the first scholar to use knowledge concerning name taboos in order to resolve some complex historical problems in his *Discrepancies in the 22 Histories* (*Nianer shi kaoyi* 廿二史考異).⁶⁶ It was a sign that research had started to develop beyond the limited problem of using and understanding taboo characters. Qian Daxin can therefore be called a pioneer of textual criticism. Another brief work from this period concerning *bihui* is Liu Xixin's 劉錫

⁵⁹ Recorded and briefly described in *Zhizhai shulu jieti*, j. 7, p. 196.

⁶⁰ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 2.

⁶¹ *Rizhilu*, j. 23, pp. 22–29; j. 26, pp. 12–14.

⁶² *Gaiyu congkao*, j. 31, pp. 20–24. For Zhao Yi, see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 1645.

⁶³ See, for example, *Shiqi shi shangque*, j. 54, pp. 482–483; j. 68, pp. 725–726. For Wang Mingsheng, see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 198.

⁶⁴ *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 42, pp. 3–5; j. 101, pp. 6–9. For Wang Chang, see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 118.

⁶⁵ *Shijiazhai yangxin lu*, j. 11, pp. 9–11; j. 16, pp. 18–19. For Qian Daxin, see: *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 1911.

⁶⁶ See, for example, *Nianer shi kaoyi*, j. 12, p. 258.

信 *Study on Taboo Names of Past Dynasties* (*Lidai huiming kao* 歷代諱名考, 1784).⁶⁷ Chapters about name tabooing are included also in Xu Song's 徐松 (1781–1848) *Song Dynasty Manuscript Compendium* (*Songhuiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿),⁶⁸ Hang Shijun's 杭世駿 (1695–1772) *Classified Corrections of Erraneous Records* (*Ding'e leibian* 訂訛類編)⁶⁹ and Zhang Zhidong's 張之洞 (1837–1909) *Words of Youxuan* (*Youxuanyu* 輶軒語).⁷⁰

Although there were numerous texts concerning name taboos prior to the 19th century, most of them were, however, limited to lists of examples, especially of emperors' taboo names, or were very fragmentary examinations of the taboo custom. One important contribution is the work of Zhou Guangye 周廣業 (1730–1798) from Haining 海甯 (in Zhejiang). He spent 30 years collecting materials on *bihui*, and sometime around 1796 he prepared an extensive text entitled *Collected Studies on Taboo Names in the Classics and Histories* (*Jingshi biming huikao* 經史避名彙考) in 46 chapters. The work was considered, as Chen Yuan for example describes it, “the most exhaustive collection of historical materials on *bihui*.”⁷¹ Zhou Guangye gives a good introduction to the Chinese phenomenon of the tabooing of name,⁷² and he lists not only the examples of emperors' taboo names for each historical period, but also those of officials, relatives of the emperor, teachers, friends and Daoist monks.⁷³ He gives no notes on the Qing dynasty, because he had to observe its taboos. Unfortunately, for a long time the work was not published, and it was only in 1981 that the manuscript was finally printed in Taiwan. To this day it has been insufficiently exploited by researchers and has had little impact on previous research, since even Chen Yuan did not actually use this work.

The first systematic academic work on *bihui* was Chen Yuan's *Examples of Taboo Names in Historical Writings* (*Shihui juli* 史諱舉例), published in 1928 by the journal *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報.⁷⁴ This work, considered as the framework of modern taboo studies (*bihuixue* 避諱學), remained the only scholarly work of this type in the field until the 1990s, and is regarded even today as a standard work, repeatedly republished⁷⁵ and

⁶⁷ *Lidai Huiming kao*, pp. 1–24.

⁶⁸ *Songhui yaojigao*, j. 51, p. 2054.

⁶⁹ *Ding'e leibian*, j. 3, pp. 20–24; j. 6, pp. 11–12.

⁷⁰ *Youxuanyu*, j. 5, pp. 3782–3785.

⁷¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 2.

⁷² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 3, pp. 42–66.

⁷³ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 24–42, pp. 350–616.

⁷⁴ Chen Yuan 1928, pp. 537–651.

⁷⁵ The most recent reprint was in 2004 by Zhonghua shuju 中华书局 in Peking.

quoted by Chinese scholars.⁷⁶ Chen Yuan described methods, effects and mistakes of tabooing, discussed different issues connected with taboo, gave a historical review of taboo in diverse times and established a basis for later taboo studies. Even if some topics brought up by Chen Yuan were only later elaborated, his book is still to this day a very important tool for research.

The difficult years of foreign invasions and civil war in the 1930s and 1940s were not favourable for research. The impulse given by Chen Yuan was picked up only in 1944 by the famous Chinese essayist Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), who used the *Shihui juli* to carry out an analysis of taboos of both Han dynasties.⁷⁷ Qu Wanli 屈萬里 (1907–1979) conducted research on posthumous names during the Shang/Yin dynasty (1948).⁷⁸ Chen Yuan himself also wrote new contributions to the study of *bihui* in separate chapters or annexes to other works, for instance in *Jiu Wudaishi jiben fafu* 舊五代史輯本發覆 (1937)⁷⁹ and *Tongjian huzhu biaowei* 通鑑胡注表微 (1945–46).⁸⁰ Later, in the People's Republic of China, Qi Rushan 齊如山 analyzed taboos of the Qing dynasty (1952)⁸¹ and Guo Moruo (1892–1978) examined taboos of the Shang and Zhou dynasties (1954).⁸² Numerous authors, such as Wang Jieyu, for example, in his article of 1966,⁸³ described the tabooing of name for a more general audience.

The theme of tabooing of names in China was noticed by Western scholars as well. The oldest mention is probably by Hilderic Friend in his “Euphemism and Tabu in China” in 1881,⁸⁴ and by Arnold Vissière in his “Traité des caractères chinois” in 1901.⁸⁵ But the first to explicitly illustrate and analyze this problem was Erich Haenisch (1880–1966). In his article “Die Heiligung des Vater- und Fürstennamens in China” in 1932, a good description of name taboo, its influence on the life of the Chinese and on written texts is given.⁸⁶ Haenisch also provided an overview on emperors' taboos with dates of their validity. Additionally, he pointed out many problems, such as the origin of tabooing or the problem of common and private taboos. Haenisch thought that *bihui* originated in a fear of ghosts,

⁷⁶ Cf. for example Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 210, 243, 256, 272, 280, 295–301.

⁷⁷ Hu Shi 1944, pp. 3055–3067.

⁷⁸ Qu Wanli 1948, pp. 219–226.

⁷⁹ Chen Yuan 1937, pp. 52–59.

⁸⁰ Chen Yuan 1997, pp. 62–75.

⁸¹ Qi Rushan 1952, pp. 8–9.

⁸² Guo Moruo 1954, pp. 113–119.

⁸³ Wang Jieyu 1966, pp. 9–13.

⁸⁴ Friend 1881, pp. 71–91.

⁸⁵ Vissière 1901, pp. 320–373. He analyzed taboo names of Qing emperors and of Confucius.

⁸⁶ Haenisch 1932, pp. 1–20.

was later transformed into deference (not excluding fear, but going beyond it) and lost its connection “with superstition.”⁸⁷ According to him, taboo was observed in the beginning only in the family of the sovereign, and only as recently as in the Han period did family taboos and taboos of holy men appear. There are practical taboo problems noted by Haenisch in connection with *bihui*, such as the observance of taboo by guests, violation of name taboos by Europeans and the reaction of Chinese (“eine tiefe Erschütterung” because of “der Profanierung eines dem Sohne heiligen Namens”),⁸⁸ the importance of taboo (ein “todwürdiges” Verbrechen) and the severity of punishment (Haenisch did not specify how severe).⁸⁹ Haenisch noticed that many new connotations of characters can be explained through the observance of taboo. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this short article with its many new insights. However, although Haenisch advocated that research on name taboo should be expanded and become more focused, and he suggested an analysis of the above-mentioned work by Chen Yuan as well as a “quellenmäßige Abhandlung”, i.e. discourse based on sources,⁹⁰ his article remains until now practically the only Western contribution that undertakes *bihui* as its main theme. A review of this article was written in 1934 by the Czech sinologist Gustav Haloun (1898–1951) in the journal *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*.⁹¹

After Haenisch, over the past eighty years, the problem of name taboo in China was mentioned in the West only in connection with other topics. An important step forward was the precise analysis of names in China done by Wolfgang Bauer (1930–1997), in his 1959 monograph *Der chinesische Personennamen*, in which he depicted the social and magical meaning of names in China, their structure and content. This work contains one chapter about the tabooing of name.⁹² His differentiation of taboo as interdiction of written and spoken characters serving as a name (name taboo) and interdiction of some words by naming (naming taboo) should be appreciated. Bauer focused primarily on this second group and mentioned the tabooing of names (prohibition of new names and the change of old ones)

⁸⁷ Haenisch 1932, p. 6.

⁸⁸ Haenisch 1932, p. 9.

⁸⁹ Haenisch 1932, p. 12.

⁹⁰ Haenisch 1932, p. 4.

⁹¹ Haloun 1934, pp. 576–579. Haloun criticized Haenisch, e.g. because he did not note previous Western authors on this topic (Friend, Vissière) and did not use Chen Yuan’s *Shihui juli*. He said that the method used by Haenisch (interpretation of taboo as a juridical problem) and dealing with *bihui* as if it belonged only to Confucian ethics is not right. Haloun thought that the taboo custom was absorbed by literati with “lahme ethische Begründungen” (p. 578), but its source, power and importance should be seen in the folk religion. According to him, it is not possible to distinguish *bihui* and other kinds of “Chinese magic of word.” Even in the official policy, examples of these can be seen.

⁹² Bauer 1959, pp. 263–270.

presuming an usurpation of authority, and connected with maladies or religion. Bauer also linked taboo with the magical power of names and criticised Chinese authors for only pointing out of the reverence for ancestors and emperors as the motive of tabooing. Unfortunately, his book did not receive much attention outside the German speaking world.

Further research on various forms and aspects of taboo in its wider sense in China based on some Chinese classical texts was done by Thomas Emmrich in his 1992 dissertation *Tabu und Meidung im antiken China*. Alongside a few other groups of taboo, i.e. connected with seasons, cohabitation of genders, or ritual actions, there is an entire chapter dedicated to language taboo.⁹³ There is only a short fragment about *bihui*,⁹⁴ but it is important to point out his description of the relation between the usage of names and someone's status, the usage of names as offence and dishonour within the *baobian* 褒貶 (praise and denigration) method of historiography ascribed to Confucius (see 3.3.1.2). He described also the changing of names in order to adjust a fate and the tabooing of words through concealment or euphemism.

There are a few other contributions dealing with name tabooing in the Western literature. The contribution of B.J. Mansvelt Beck "The first Emperor's taboo character..." should be mentioned. He analyzed the name taboo for the First Emperor of the Qin on the basis of a "Chronicle" from Shuihudi 睡虎地 and demonstrated that this name had not been considered taboo during the emperor's lifetime.⁹⁵ Mieczysław J. Künstler examined the taboos of a few names of animals from a linguistic perspective in his article „Taboo and the development of periphrasis in Chinese" published in 1994.⁹⁶ In general, it can be concluded that research on *bihui* in the West is still insufficient and has not received much attention.⁹⁷

In contrast, in modern China since the end of the 1970s, and especially since the 1990s, a boom of research on taboo can be seen. There are numerous articles popularizing the problem of name tabooing.⁹⁸ New editions, reviews and comments to old works on *bihui* have been published.⁹⁹ The research concentrates today on different topics related to the tabooing of name. There is a number of articles describing the problem of *bihui* in concrete

⁹³ Emmrich 1992, pp. 12-49.

⁹⁴ Emmrich 1992, pp. 25-27.

⁹⁵ Mansvelt Beck 1987, pp. 68-85.

⁹⁶ Künstler 1994, pp.129-138.

⁹⁷ There is still an article of Michel Soymié "Observations sur les caractères interdits en Chine", dealing with some taboo instances in Dunhuang texts (Soymié 1990, pp. 377-407).

⁹⁸ Cf. for example Zhou Xiuqiang 1979, p. 3; He Wenbai 1984, pp. 63-65; Li Hualin 2001, p. 26; Chen Ming 2004, pp. 22-23.

⁹⁹ Cf. for example Zhang Hengjun 2003, pp. 77-79 about the tabooing of names in the works of Chen Yuan.

works, for example, in novels such as the *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢) by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (ca. 1715–1764),¹⁰⁰ *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅, 16 c.),¹⁰¹ *Marriage Awakening the World* (*Xingshi yinyuan* 醒世姻緣 by Xi Zhousheng 西周生 or Pu Songling 蒲松齡 1640–1715) and *Yu, Jiao, and Li* (*Yujiaoli* 玉嬌梨 by Di'an sanren 荻岸散人 of the Qing period).¹⁰² Similarly, an analysis of name tabooing was done of the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳), as well as the first Chinese work on historiography *Generalities on History* (*Shitong* 史通) by Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (written ca. 708–710), the long Tang poem *Ballad of the Lady Qin* (*Qinfuyin* 秦婦吟) by Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (851–910), the *Veritable Records of Qing Taizu* (*Qing Taizu shilu* 清太祖實錄, issued in 1636, revised in 1683), as well as a host of other individual works.¹⁰³

Other scholars have been involved in the research and analysis of *bihui* regarding specific concrete persons, including Du Fu, Sima Qian, Han Yu, and others.¹⁰⁴ Yet another group of scholars has tried to analyze *bihui* in a specific geographical region, i.e. in Sichuan, Henan,¹⁰⁵ or in one fixed period, i.e. during the Qin, Han and Jin dynasty, Three Kingdoms (Wu), Wei and Jin, Tang, Song, Western Xia, Liao, Jin and Yuan.¹⁰⁶ The period of the Taiping Rebellion has appeared particularly often in studies of taboo.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Wei Ziyun 1994, p. 5; Jia Sui 1994, pp. 125–134; Zhang Yingxian – Zhang Renshi 2010, pp. 306–322.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Cheng Jiping 1998, pp. 39–44. According to the article, the author of *Jinpingmei* intentionally violated imperial taboos, and therefore he did not sign the text with his original name. As we know the author of *Jinpingmei* was Lanling Xiaoxiao sheng 蘭陵笑笑生 (The Scoffing Scholar of Lanling). This is a clear pseudonym and the identity of author is not yet known.

¹⁰² For *Xingshi yinyuan* see Cao Dawei 1988, pp. 64–71. For *Yujiaoli* see Su Tiegge 1987, p. 54.

¹⁰³ For *Gongyangzhuan* see Li Xiaowei – Lian Yongjie 2009, pp. 48–52. For *Shitong* see Li Qiuyuan 1988, pp. 14–21, 13. For *Qinfuyin* see Zhang Tianjian 1985, pp. 61–64. For *Qing Taizu shilu* see Xue Hong 1988, pp. 33–44. For *Lunyu* see Cheng Bangxiong 1997, pp. 109–117. For *Shiji* see Liang Jianbang 2001, pp. 23–27. For *Songshu* and *Nanshi* see Zhu Xiangyun 2004, pp. 37–40. For *Mingshi* see Wang Hongkai 1990, pp. 273–276. For *Shanghanlun* see Mao Jinyun – Chen Min 1997, pp. 2 and 59; Mao Jinyun – Chen Min 1997a, p. 43. For *Yanshi jiaxun* see Qian Guoqi 2004, pp. 43–51, 112.

¹⁰⁴ For Du Fu see Wang Zhongyong 1992, pp. 6–12 and 17. For Sima Qian see Liang Jianbang 2001, pp. 23–27; Liang Jianbang 2002, pp. 54–56. For Han Yu see He Gensheng 1995, pp. 65–71.

¹⁰⁵ For Sichuan see Xiang Xi 1999, p. 7. For Henan see Lin Conglong 1995, p. 46; Bao Ximing 2008, pp. 164–166.

¹⁰⁶ For Qin dynasty see Cheng Qili 1989, pp. 38–42; Liu Dianjue 1988, pp. 217–290. For Han and Jin dynasty see Huang Qingmin 2004, pp. 147–149. For Three Kingdoms (Wu) see Liu Dianjue 1991, pp. 119–144. For Wei and Jin see Wang Jian 2000, pp. 8–12, 21. For Tang dynasty see Deng Rui 1985, p. 3; Xu Lianda 1993, pp. 17–24; He Genshen 1999, pp. 12–15; Wang Jian 2002b, pp. 100–103. For Song dynasty see Zhu Ruixi 1988, pp. 89–94, 88; Wang Zengyu 1998, pp. 59–61. For Western Xia see Han Xiaomang 1994, pp. 59–63. For Liao, Jin and Yuan dynasties see Wang Jian 2002a, pp. 18–22.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. for example Wu Liangzuo 1987, pp. 120–125; Wu Liangzuo 1988, pp. 106–113; Wu Liangzuo 1993, pp. 101–107; Chen Peirong 1994, pp. 89–90; Xu Yuan – Rui Min – Gui Chang 2003, pp. 43–45; Liu Hongwei 2010, pp. 31–32.

There are further contributions about some aspects of the tabooing of names, for instance the origin of *bihui* and its first period in Shang and Zhou,¹⁰⁸ taboo names in the rubbings of stone steles,¹⁰⁹ or in Dunhuang-texts,¹¹⁰ as well as about particular cases of *bihui* (i.e., of an official or someone's father), abstract principles of *bihui*,¹¹¹ the application of taboo knowledge for determining the age and authenticity of a text on the basis of taboo, and the study of taboo in dialects.¹¹² Still other articles deal with single taboo characters or try to reconstruct the pronunciation of characters with the help of the taboo custom.¹¹³ This development of research in China, done at the turn of the 21st century, yielded a few monographs summarizing the results of many research works. Wu Liangzuo studied name taboos during the rebellion of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace in the mid-nineteenth century in his *Taiping tianguo bihui yanjiu*,¹¹⁴ Wang Jian described the chronological development of *bihui* in his *Zhongguo gudai bihui shi*¹¹⁵ and Li Deqing listed about 800 examples of geographical names that were changed because name taboos in his *Lishi diming bihui kao*.¹¹⁶ In 1997, a dictionary of taboo characters was published by Wang Yankun with 987 entries, in which name taboos are listed, quoted and commented.¹¹⁷ Another good dictionary was edited by Wang Jian.¹¹⁸

Research on tabooing of name is a very hot topic in China and has attained the status of an autonomous field of study within the discipline of history – (name) taboo studies (*bihiuxue* 避諱學). In the past few years, two monographs have been published which systematically review current knowledge about name taboo. In 2006 Fan Zhixin 范志新 in his book *Bihiuxue* 避諱學 collected and described the results of research on the origin and kinds of name taboo, methods and principles of tabooing, problems connected with taboo and its determination, and the application of knowledge of taboo in practice. He also showed how to use the principles of *bihiuxue* in the dating and studying of historical documents. A selection of articles about name taboo and a rich bibliography on *bihui* are

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Cao Songlin 1984, pp. 108-112; Wang Jian 1999, pp. 44-46; Zheng Huisheng 2000, pp. 121-122.

¹⁰⁹ Yi Ta 2001, pp. 64-65.

¹¹⁰ Wang Yunsheng 1996, pp. 59-65 ; Dou Huaiyong, Xu Jianping 2004, pp. 52-56.

¹¹¹ Wang Zhenzhu 2009, pp. 95-97.

¹¹² Wen Changyan 2000, pp. 62-65.

¹¹³ Yu Wanli 1993, pp. 26-35, 50; Yu Wanli 1995, pp. 137-146, 136.

¹¹⁴ Wu Liangzuo 1998.

¹¹⁵ Wang Jian 2002.

¹¹⁶ Li Deqing 2001.

¹¹⁷ Wang Yankun 1997.

¹¹⁸ Wang Jian 2011.

also included in his book.¹¹⁹ One year later, in 2007, the book of Wang Xinhua *Bihui yanjiu* was published, in which the author described, among other things, new topics in the field, such as penalties for offences against taboo or the development of taboo custom.¹²⁰

A review of the current status of taboo studies shows that there are numerous results of research. We know a lot about *bihui* in different periods, places, books or taboos of specific persons. This research still needs to be continued. It has concentrated so far especially on imperial taboos, while other topics are somewhat neglected because of the sources used and the traditional approach. For example, the problem of *bihui*'s origins and its first periods during the Shang and Zhou dynasty needs further research. One other problem is the limitations of *bihui*. The research in PR China describes name taboo as an absolutely secular phenomenon with no relation to magic or religion. Related taboo practices such as avoidance of ominous words, of the Five Elements or of Celestial Stems (see for example 9.3.1) are subsumed under problems of name tabooing. Other topics and themes like taboos in Daoism or folk religion are practically omitted, perhaps apart from the previously mentioned work of Zhou Guangye, which has a broad view on *bihui*. One interesting topic is the problem of taboos in the ideology of rebellions. However, until now (apart from Taipings), it has not been brought up.

In the last 15 years methods of *bihuixue* have been repeatedly applied to solve problems in other disciplines, such as Dunhuang studies or *Hongloumeng* studies, for example, but its further application in other subjects should be continued, e.g. in phonetic studies and for the identification of age and authenticity of works. Also needed is a discussion about the place of *bihuixue* within other disciplines. Name taboo studies can be considered on the one hand an ancillary discipline of history, to which it offers indispensable tools, and on the other hand also as a part of anthropology, as the phenomenon of taboo is an important component of culture or the history of religion.

The research on taboo in China has reached a point where it needs a new methodological level and more integration with social and religious studies. A source of new ideas can be inter alia works of Chen Yuan and Zhou Guangye, which are used only partially by contemporary scholars. Last but not least, an impulse for the renewal of research in the West is needed, which can bring progress to all sinological disciplines. Some Western authors have already included brief remarks about name tabooing, e.g. Rafe de

¹¹⁹ Cf. Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 317-429.

¹²⁰ Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 121-129, 154-163.

Crespigny in his *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms*,¹²¹ but an overarching study is still lacking.

1.4. Purpose and Scope of the Research

Upon first reading the rough draft of a translation of Chen Yuan's *Examples of Taboo Names in Historical Writings* (*Shihui juli* 史諱舉例), done by Heinrich Busch (1912–2002), the author of this dissertation considered it an old work with merely historical value. It was introduced to him by Roman Malek who inherited this translation after the death of Heinrich Busch as a new editor of the *Monumenta Serica*. Heinrich Busch had spent many years translating this work.¹²² He was of course well-known as the editor of the journal *Monumenta Serica* for many decades and shares with the author of this dissertation a common background as a member of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). The *Examples of Taboo Names in Historical Writings* is a standard work about the *bihui* problem written 1928 in classical Chinese.¹²³ Among Busch's unpublished works found at the Monumenta Serica Institute, his draft English translation of the *Shihui juli* was completed at the end of the 1950s.

In the process of my research, it became more and more apparent that the topic of tabooing names practically appears in all periods of Chinese history and is a very important aspect of Chinese culture. As noted, the custom of tabooing names has been actively studied in China in recent years, but it is hard to find Western literature on the subject. On the other hand, the new (Chinese) research is still in a relatively early stage. Though there have been numerous articles on the topic in the past twenty years, only a few attempts were made at a systematic, comprehensive view, as in the previously mentioned works of Wang Jian, Fan Zhixin and Wang Xinhua.¹²⁴

Hence it is the purpose of this dissertation to analyze and describe the practice of the tabooing of names in China. This work intends to show the historical evolution of this practice and its implications for Chinese culture. The tabooing of names in China is not a marginal or insignificant problem, but really at the core of Chinese culture and an important way of implementing social values.

¹²¹ Cf. for example De Crespigny 2007, pp.14, 31, 206, 289, 339, 1125.

¹²² About Heinrich Busch see Malek 2006, p. 491-508.

¹²³ Chen Yuan 1928.

¹²⁴ Wang Jian 2002; Fan Zhixin 2006; Wang Xinhua 2007.

There are many questions that need to be studied and that were posed in the beginning of this research, such as: What is the origin of the *bihui* custom in China? Does it have any relation to other taboo customs? How did *bihui* evolve in history? Was it only an expression of courtesy and respect? What are the social and religious aspects of *bihui*? What impact did the tabooing of names have on Chinese culture? What about taboos of women and rebels? Not every question can be answered. As this dissertation progressed, it was discovered that the Chinese custom of *bihui* had a strong connection to “religious taboo” (*jinsi*) and can be considered as an eminent part of it. The tabooing of names in China has been found as a conglomerate of various customs: official and private, religious and profane. The usage of social, political and religious taboos evolved in different periods and segments of society and was affected by different factors and trends, as for example the authority and power of the emperor, or local customs.

The topic of name taboos is approached from different angles in this study. In order to provide an introduction to the phenomenon of the tabooing of names, it starts with a detailed systematic and historical description of name taboo practices from historical perspective. In this work, there is a strong emphasis on the textual dimension of this practice (the implications of name taboo for texts). At the same time, however, a historical-anthropological analysis is given in order to understand social, political and ideological contexts of taboo practice. This dissertation is an attempt to determine the place of name tabooing in Chinese culture.

The first source and the starting point of this project was, as already mentioned, Chen Yuan’s *Shihui juli* (in the beginning through Busch’s translation). The first step was to make a presentation and critical edition of translation. In the original project of this dissertation the author wanted to attach Busch’s translation to the present work in order to exemplify in that way the topic of name tabooing. However, it would most likely be redundant for the reader, as many topics established by Chen Yuan are already discussed in this work in combination with more material and new insights, and so it was finally decided to omit it. This dissertation is to be understood as a continuation of the reflection on name tabooing in China in the spirit of Chen Yuan. It maps out questions that Chen Yuan did not answer or did not pose, and tries to lay out in that way some directions for future research in this field.

Apart from the *Shihui juli*, numerous historical works have been used as sources, especially standard dynastical histories. The historical literature included many taboo

examples and can provide an overview of the official practice of this custom. Other additional sources (archaeological, poetic etc.) have also been used sporadically. Numerous articles and research contributions dealing with name tabooing have been analyzed and verified.

As for the approach used to present the issue of name tabooing, three methods have been employed. An editorial method was used in the beginning for the preparation of the English text of the *Shihui juli*, including a critical overview of the translation, comparison with the original edition, comments and additions. Philological and historical methods were used to analyze historical sources in their context and to describe the problem.

The present dissertation has, of course, its limitations. As it is based mainly on Chinese historical works, which were usually written by a small corpus of the male literate elite, many aspects of religious and popular culture could be analyzed only in a limited way. Because of the wide spectrum of the taboo issue in China and the stage of research on this topic, numerous topics have only been partly elaborated. It is hoped that this contribution can serve as an incentive for future research elaborating this theme. It is to be understood as the first step of research that will be continued. Most of the sources used here are written in classical Chinese and in most cases no existing translations have been discovered. Therefore the author is aware of possible inaccuracies in his translations.

The dissertation is divided into ten chapters: The first chapter introduces the subject, terminology and the state of the field. The second one on taboo and names shows the context of name tabooing in China. The third chapter introduces the basic characteristics of name tabooing (subjects, kinds, methods, principles, etc.). Then the fourth chapter discusses the origin of the *bihui* custom and its development until the Qin dynasty. The next three chapters describe the history of taboo practice in successive periods: its ancient period (chapter five), its culmination (chapter six) and its final stage (chapter seven). Here it also touches upon the problem of name taboo in China today. Chapter eight shows the impact of the tabooing custom on the lives of people, and chapter nine – its impact for historiography. In the tenth and final chapter, specific themes related to name tabooing are analyzed, such as taboos of women, taboos in religious practice, the impact of Chinese taboo on other countries and particular cases of taboo custom. In the concluding remarks, the meaning and impact of the custom of tabooing names on Chinese culture will be summarized.

1.5. Relevance

More than 80 years ago the first systematic study on name tabooing in China was done by Chen Yuan. However, only recently an intensive research on this topic started in China and become an important interdisciplinary field of research, *biHuixue* 避諱學. This knowledge about tabooing of name helps us to understand the practice of *bihui* and to determine taboo characters better, but also to reveal various editions of works, to determine the age of texts, to reconstruct old names, meanings and pronunciations, etc. At the present time, it is not possible to imagine historiography or literary criticism in China without a deep knowledge of *bihui*. Serious research on Chinese history, especially research based on historical texts, needs to include the findings of *biHuixue* in its own analysis.¹²⁵

This dissertation intends to be a systematic study of Chinese name tabooing customs, which until now have been relatively little explored in Western language sinological studies. Existing research in Chinese is extensively used, but new themes are introduced as well, such as taboos of women, or the adoption of name taboos by rebels. Furthermore, this work attempts to provide a long-term perspective on the changing dynamics of tabooing, such as the shift from tabooing based on oral usage towards taboos based on the written forms of tabooed characters.

¹²⁵ Cf. „*Bihuixue* is an indispensable knowledge in the research on Chinese history” (*Zhongguo lishi da cidian* 2000, Vol. 2, p. 3246).

