STRATEGIC BEHAVIOR OF

CHINESE POLITICAL ELITES

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Abstract

This paper aims at constructing a conceptual framework for studying the strategic behavior of Chinese political elites. Three basic concepts are employed herein: The concepts of social dramas and of arena are used to delineate the temporal and spatial dimensions of strategic behavior, while the concept of metaphor is used to explain how Chinese political elites formulate their strategems. The paper further examines various rules of the political elites' behavior, and suggests directions for empirical studies of the subject.

中國政治精英的計策行為

喬 健 著

摘 要

　　本文旨在建立一個研究中國政治精英計策行為的理論架構。在此架構中有三個基本概念：社會劇、賽場與譬喻。社會劇與賽場分別用來界定計策行為的時間與空間相度，而譬喻則用來說明政治精英設定與操作計策的心理過程。本文進而闡釋政治精英行為的各類規則並指出對其計策行為進行實徵研究的一些方向。

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The purpose of this paper is to construct a conceptual framework for studying "Strategic Behavior of Chinese Political Elites," an important but so far neglected subject. With this conceptual framework, I will make an analysis of the general nature of the subject. This conceptual framework and analysis hopefully will lay a foundation for empirical or case studies of the subject which is, however, not attempted in this paper. In the construction of the said conceptual framework, three basic concepts--social drama, arena and metaphor--heavily influenced by Victor Turner (1974), will play key roles.

Strategic Actions as Social Dramas

I view strategic actions of Chinese elites as on-going shows or, to use Victor Turner's term, social dramas. Like Turner, I also have the view that "the social world is a world in becoming, not a world in being" (1974:24). Such a point of view, however, is only to emphasize the processual nature of the social world; it does not imply "direction" and "progress." Turner sees "movement as much as structure, persistence as much as change, indeed, persistence as a striking aspect of change" (1974:32). In the process of "social time," he perceives a form which he calls "social dramas" (1974:32-33) and argues that:

> social dramas...can be isolated for study in societies at all levels of scale and complexity. This is particularly the case in political situations, and belongs to what I now call the dimension of "structure" as opposed to that of "communitas" as a generic mode of human interrelatedness. (1974:33)

Emphasis on the temporal and processual aspects of the social world makes Turner's theory of social dramas particularly enlightening to my study. His detailed account of social dramas such as the four main phases of public action (1974:37-42) is, however, too specific for the present paper, and I will skip discussion of it at this stage.

Turner's theory of social dramas provides scientific support to a popular Chinese view that human life is like a drama and the social world a stage. Remarks

expressing such views are numerous. One example can be found in the first chapter of one of the most popular Chinese novels, The *Dream of the Red Chamber*, also known as The *Story of the Stone*:

> In such commotion does the world's theatre rage:
> As each one leaves, another takes the stage.
> In vain we roam:
> Each in the end must call a strange land home. Each of us with that poor girl may compare
> Who sews a wedding-gown for another bride to wear.
> (Cao 1973:65)

Just as 'as each one leaves, another takes the stage,' the social dramas of Chinese elites' strategic actions continue with no intermission and no ending. Anytime you peep through the heavy drapery of the theatre, you can feel the commotion from the stage. An extreme and cynical comment that we often hear is that as the social drama goes on forever, it may also be repetitive: whether the paramount role was played by Emperors Qin Huang (reigned from 246-210 B.C.), Han Wu (140-87 B.C.), Tang Jong (627-649), Song Ju (960-976) or Genghis Khan (1206-1227), as prominently listed in the best known poem by Mao Zedong (1973:56), or Mao himself or Deng Xiaoping after Mao, they all just repeated the same show. This, of course, cannot be true, in view of the fact that numerous and significant changes in economy, society and politics have constantly taken place throughout Chinese history. On the other hand, this social drama is unique in human history for its long and uninterrupted tradition. Extremely rich resources of knowledge about the performance, especially those concerning various stratagems and their application, have been formed and accumulated in the process. All the newcomers to the stage could draw references from these resources for their own performance. As a result, despite all kinds of changes in society, the strategic behavior of Chinese elites has manifested a strong continuity; as the famous writer Lu Xun rightly pointed out: "Struggles yet to be over, old patterns will be used again and again" (Zhou 1933:202). In the process of repetition, the "old patterns" became improved and enriched; as a contemporary columnist observes:

> None of our high officials today are the graduates of the
> Law and Government Institute of either the Qing

> Dynasty or the Republic. Nonetheless they all have learnt the complete skills and are as competent as their predecessors....This knowledge (for the use of stratagems) has indeed a long history and rich content. After further promotion and elaboration by Lin Biao and the "Gang of Four," it has already formed a complete system which deserves systematic study by institutes like The National Academy of Social Science. (Huang 1979:7)

In one of my earlier papers (Chiao 1986: 241-42, actually written in 1980), I testified to the same kind of phenomenon on the basis of my own experience:

> Though I was born, brought up and completed most of my education in China, still my seven years of living in a Chinese society in Hong Kong is a rather unique experience. This is the first time I have ever lived in my own society as a "full time" permanently and gainfully employed adult member. My perspective towards Chinese society obtained therein is quite different from my previous one. This is, in fact, comparable to my experience within American society. As I reflect upon it, my perspective of American society gained later as a faculty member (at Indiana University) was quite different from what I obtained early as a graduate student (at Cornell University). As I re-entered my own society in a different capacity, my first and foremost "culture shock" was the intensity of "game playing." True, this is rather a common phenomenon in any complex society. But nowhere else have I ever observed such a "scene" that almost all members of a given organization are engaged in the endless and ever intensifying "game playing" or "politics." Looking from this "vantage point," I have found the political struggles on the Chinese Mainland especially what have been revealed in the "black material" which were published deliberately to expose the wickedness of the persons under attack very much resemble what I have observed in my own institute, though on a much larger scale. I feel that I have been truly a participant observer of the oldest system of uninterrupted social and political maneuver on earth, and among the largest human community which has become much more sophisticated in latter days.

The above statements, like numerous others, all point to a picture which is readily observable to all alert native Chinese and sophisticated foreigners, that is, the persistent nature of the strategic behavior of Chinese elites.

Though this picture largely reflects reality, it by no means suggests, as pointed out earlier, that the same kind of elites and the same kind of social dramas have recurred in different periods of Chinese history. This picture indicates primarily only one thing, that is, in their strategic actions, Chinese elites draw from common resources the information for forming their stratagems and the rules to

apply these stratagems; such common resources of information are products of a long and uninterrupted historical process.

To be fair, the strategic behavior of Chinese elites, though persistent, is not static, but changes in a slow, additive and elaborative process. This process is a kind of involution. According to Clifford Geetz, Goldenweiser first found the involution process in art:

> Take, for instance, the decorative art of the Maori, distinguished by its complexity, elaborateness, and the extent to which the entire decorated object is pervaded by the decoration....What we have here is the pattern plus continued development....The inevitable result is progressive complication, a variety within uniformity, virtuosity within monotony. This is *involution*. A parallel instance....is provided by what is called ornateness in art, as in the late Gothic. (Goldenweiser 1936, quoted in Geertz 1963:81)

Geertz identified the same kind of process in Javanese agriculture:

> The general earmarks of involution that Goldenweiser lists for aesthetic phenomena characterized the development of the Sarah system after about the middle of the nineteenth century: increasing tenacity of basic pattern; internal elaboration and ornateness; technical hairsplitting, and unending virtuosity. And this "late gothic" quality of agriculture increasingly pervaded the whole rural economy. (Geertz 1963: 82)

I identified the development of female inequality in China society from the Han to the Ch'ing Dynasty as another case of involution (1989:144). I now think that the strategic behavior of Chinese elites would be an even better example of involution than the other three cases just mentioned.

What then is the position of this conservative strategic behavior of Chinese elites in the context of overall political change in China? How has the former affected the latter and vice versa? These are vital questions for understanding the dynamics of Chinese politics. Before we are capable of answering these questions, we have to first understand the nature of strategic behavior of Chinese elites. Unfortunately, little systematic research about this subject is available. To be sure, I have published a few papers (Chiao 1981, 1981a, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1995), but they are rather piecemeal and unable to reveal the whole picture of such

behavior. In this study, I will try to make a more complete analysis of it. This analysis, as mentioned earlier, will be based on three cardinal concepts: social dramas, arena and metaphor. I have already discussed the first of these concepts, and will deal with the next two in the paragraphs that follow.

The Concept of Arena in the Study of Strategic Behavior

In the preceding discussions, I have used several times the word "stage" to refer to the place where strategic behavior is displayed. In recent years, a number of technical terms have been proposed in social science to identify such a place, such as "frame" (Goffman 1974: 11), "field" (Turner 1968:6) and "arena" (Turner 1974: 17; Orum 1979:38). Among them, arena is the one used most widely and also the one that I would like to adopt for this study. In fact, in one of my recent articles (Chiao 1995), the usefulness of the concept of arena in the study of Chinese strategic behavior has been thoroughly discussed. According to Anthony M. Orum:

> In every society--at least those of which we have knowledge-- there is a public arena in which individuals engage in the activities of politics, in the fights and struggles over who is to be dominant and who is to be subordinate. Furthermore, it suggests that we think of this arena exclusively in spatial terms, as naturally implied by the concept "arena" itself. There are two essential properties of this space. The first is that it possesses a center or, more loosely, a center-stage. This center-stage provides the platform on which political struggles are fought, and from which those who become successful will exercise their power, the vital medium of politics. The second major property of this space is that it must be construed in social rather than in physical terms. That is, the arena is not a physical setting as we normally think of it, whose positions and distances are to be described in physical terms--viz., inches--but rather is a social space whose positions and distances are to be described in social terms--viz., roles and relationships. (1979:38)

Marc J. Swartz (1968: 6-15) and Turner (1974: 17) consider "arena" as an auxiliary to "field" (Swartz 1968: 10) and use both concepts. Swartz thus demarcates these two concepts:

> A field is defined by "the interest and involvement of the participants" in the process being studied and its contents include the values, meanings, resources, and relationships employed by these participants in that process....Given the fluidity and the absence of any claim to being all inclusive, it seems to me that the

> value of the concept can be increased by defining a social
> and cultural area which is immediately adjacent to the field
> both in space and in time....The contents of this second
> space, which I will call...the "arena," depend upon relations
> with participants in the field, but it includes more than the
> field. In addition to the actors who populate it, the arena
> also contains the repertory of values, meanings, and
> resources these actors possess, together with the
> relationships among them and with the member of the field.
> Values, meanings, and resources possessed by the field
> participants but not employed by them in the process which
> constitute the field are also part of the arena. (1968:9)

Such demarcation is important when "actors" come from different racial and cultural

backgrounds. Since this is not the situation in the Chinese case, at least not for the

present study, it is sufficient to let "arena" stand for both concepts.

Putting Orum's and Swartz's definitions together, "arena" has at least the

following properties: (1) It implies a space with boundaries, yet it can only be

construed in social terms--viz., roles and relationships. (2) It possesses a center

defined again in social terms only. (3) It contains the repertory of values, rules,

meanings, and resources that the "actors" possess or, to add a line of my own, have

access to.

The employment of the "arena" concept here is not to develop a theory but to

lighten up an area for facilitating the investigation of activities and data that have

been so far overlooked by scholars of Chinese studies. This concept is applicable in

a case study, for example, of strategic actions in a town government or congress

where the arena can be clearly identified with the above definition. In a general

study like the present one, dealing with strategic actions mainly at the national level,

we can also identify the arena with the three properties listed above.

For Chinese elites, a political arena where ambitious people gather to compete

for power, fame, status, and wealth always presents itself clearly. It is referred to

metaphorically as the "court" in popular idiom:

> *Zheng li yu shi, zheng ming yu chao* (To compete for profits
> in the market, but for fame in the court).

Here we see an interesting comparison between the commercial arena--the

market--and the political arena: the court which is, to be exact, the center of the

arena. In another popular saying it is referred to as a more open and wide space, as "rivers and lakes":

> *Ren zai jiang hu, shen bu you ji* (when a man is in rivers and lakes [an open, unbounded field,] he cannot freely manage himself.)

As suggested by these two metaphorical idioms, the political arena at the national level is vague, abstract and imaginary, yet all Chinese elites are aware of its existence including its center, its boundaries, and its contents--values, rules and roles and relationships that they may perform or deal with. Just as nobody can stand idle in a sports field, once they are inside the political arena they are forced to act and react according to the long-established rules and with stratagems that they have designed with the knowledge obtained from the rich repertory of the arena. They cannot stop all these activities unless they withdraw from the arena. The well known story of the great poet Tao Qian (365-427) is the best illustration of this point. Tao had held several offices because of his economic need; the last position he held was as the prefect of Penze County (close to present Hukou county in Jiangxi Province). But he was very tired of all the bureaucratic dealings, and decided to resign. One day, when he learned that a commissioner would soon come to inspect his county, he said to himself: "How could I bow to and humbly entertain such a petty man merely for 50 litres of rice?" (which was his salary) So he left his official seal in his office, returned to his home village and wrote a famous verse to show his determination to permanently withdraw from politics:

> May my friendships be broken off and my wanderings come to an end. The world and I shall have nothing more to do with one another.
> If I were again to go abroad, what should I seek?
> (Tao 1970:269)

Tao's story clearly suggests the existence of the political arena. But of course this existence is more a social than a physical reality.

Tao could not withdraw from the political arena simply by leaving the county seat and going back to his home village. He had to sever all his social relationships and discontinue the social intercourse as declared in the above

quotation. Furthermore, he had to abandon all the values and rules related to strategic behavior. In the essay "The Biography of Mr. Five Willow Trees," Tao described how the hero, who was in fact Tao himself, behaved whenever he was invited to drink:

> By nature he liked wine, but being poor could not always come by it. Knowing the circumstances, his friends and relatives would invite him over when they had wine. He could not drink without emptying his cup, and always ended up drunk, after which he would retire, unconcerned about what might come. (Tao 1970: 4)

Not to get drunk and to depart at the appropriate time when invited to a party is a basic courtesy in social intercourse and a rule of strategic behavior. To ignore it is to abandon all the rules related to strategic behavior, and to completely withdraw from the political arena in social terms.

The scope of "arena" varies according to the purpose and point of view from which the arena is defined. In respect to the first criterion, it may be defined, for example, at the local level by referring only to the prefect's office of Pengze county when only the immediate circumstance of Tao's resignation is concerned, or at the national level by referring to the whole political set-up of Tao's time when the general background of Tao's decision is examined.

In respect to the second criterion, the scope of arena varies significantly whether it is defined from the point of view of the investigator or from that of the actor, or in anthropological jargon, whether defined etically or emically. The distinction between etic and emic definitions of the scope of arena, I submit on the basis of my own observation, is a common pitfall for the student of Chinese politics. A good example to illustrate my point is the Sino-British negotiation on the status of Hong Kong. Chinese leaders were rather hostile and rude towards their British counterparts prior to the negotiation, especially Deng Xiaoping's attitude towards Margaret Thacther. But after the British government accepted China's principle of "One country two systems" as the basis for negotiation, China demonstrated an extraordinarily cooperative and rational attitude throughout the negotiation, which has surprised many China watchers in the West. To my knowledge, only a few

China specialists in Taiwan (for example Zhang 1984 and Cao 1984) pointed out that the true reason for this unusually reasonable attitude of the Chinese government was that in this negotiation, they were not only concerned with Hong Kong but with Taiwan as well. They wanted, with their reasonable attitude in this negotiation, to convince Taiwan to eventually negotiate with them for reunification. In other words, for this particular negotiation, the Chinese government had an arena which was much wider in scope than that which was conceived either by their British counterparts or by Western China watchers.

Strategies, Stratagems, and Metaphors

As inferred from the previous discussions on social dramas, a Chinese elite in his arena is always a "historical" figure. This has a triple meaning: (1) he acts in an on-going drama, (2) there are numerous individuals who have performed his part in the past to whom he could make references for his own performance, and (3) he draws on values, rules and most importantly, knowledge for formulating his stratagems from the repertory accumulated in history as a part of the arena.
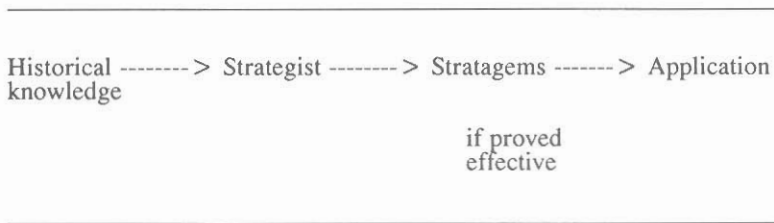
I have several times used the word "stratagem." As I plan to use it throughout this study, I will now give it a clear definition. It derives from the Greek word *stratagema* which etymologically means to be a general (*strategos*, general) and also means maneuver. One of the definitions given in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* is: "a cleverly contrived trick or scheme for gaining an end." In this paper, it is used to refer to a scheme designed to deal with a specific individual or group and/or a specific situation or problem, and to gain a specific end. Every stratagem is designed under special circumstances and for a special purpose; it is different from "strategy," which I have reserved for schemes of more general purpose. In my earlier papers, I used these two terms interchangeably, but now I think it is necessary to make the above distinction, which I will explain later in this paper. The agent who formulates and applies stratagems, in this paper a member of the Chinese elite, is referred to as "strategist."

As all stratagems are historical in nature, the forms are bound to be

traditional. On the other hand, because they always deal with present or forthcoming problems, they have to be instrumental and effective, which means that they must be functional. Here, historical information accumulated since ancient times is transformed through the ingenuity of Chinese elites into contemporarily relevant and pragmatic devices. The nature of such transformation is the core issue of this study.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, the transformation process just mentioned can be expressed as:

Diagram 1: Formulation Process of Stratagems

Historical --------> Strategist --------> Stratagems -------> Application
knowledge

                                              if proved
                                              effective

The key part of this process is what happens in the strategist's mind. How does he select and turn historical knowledge into useful stratagems? This mental operation is generally recognized by linguists as metaphorical. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980:5). They further argue that

> Human thought processes are largely metaphorical. This is what we mean when we say that the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined. (ibid)

Although basic to human thought, metaphor is, as Robert A. Nisbet has so strongly emphasized, a rather special way of knowing. Allow me to make a lengthy quotation from him:

> Metaphor is a way of knowing--one of the oldest, most deeply embedded, even indispensable ways of knowing in the history of human consciousness. It is, at its simplest, a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown. It is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one thing are transferred in an instantaneous, almost unconscious, flash of insight to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity,

> unknown to us. The test of essential metaphor, Philip Wheelwright has written, "is not any rule of grammatical form, but rather the quality of semantic transformation that is brought about"....Metaphoric knowledge, in short, is the very opposite of the type of knowledge that comes to us through mere additive experience, through patient dissection of observations, through elaboration, deductive or inductive, of meanings already contained in a proposition, through either analysis or synthesis as these terms are best known. Metaphor is none of these. Metaphor is our means of effecting instantaneous fusion of two separate realms of experience into one illuminating, iconic, encapsulating image. (1969:4)

According to Nisbet, then, a metaphor is: (1) "a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown," (2) a semantic transformation, and (3) a means of "effecting instantaneous fusion of two separate realms of experience into one illuminating, iconic, encapsulating image" (Ibid).

Following the discussion of the third cardinal concept--metaphor--allow me to make a quick return to the second cardinal concept--arena--and make a note of two popular Chinese figures of speech for it: battlefield and chessboard.

Chinese often conceive an analogy between human life and battle. Hence, they consider any area where human competitions takes place--any "arena" according to our term as defined earlier--as analogous to a battlefield. Though this kind of analogy is also common in many other cultures, it seems to be particularly favored by Chinese as they freely and in large scale transform the concepts, rules and strategies of the battlefield into those in the political arena (or other non-military fields like business).

"Human life is like a chess game" is another favorite Chinese simile. Consequently they often view the political arena as analogous to a chessboard. A popular classical Chinese poem by the great poet Du Fu (712-770), for example, referred to the ancient Chinese capital Zhangan (now Xian) as a chessboard (1966:467). Chinese also transform the concepts, rules and strategy of the chess game into those of politics and other non-game fields, but on a much smaller scale as compared to the "battle" simile.

I will discuss later individual cases of the "battlefield" and "chessboard"

similes applied to politics. For the time being, however, let me introduce a new term related to the knowing process of metaphor. The set of ideas from which the metaphorical processes described by Nisbet begin is called a "conceptual archetype" by Max Black:

> For want of a better term, I shall speak of "conceptual archetypes" or, more briefly, of "archetypes"....By an archetype I mean a systematic repertoire of ideas by means of which a given thinker describes, by analogical extension, some domain to which those ideas do not immediately and literally apply. Thus, a detailed account of a particular archetype would require a list of key words and expressions, with statements of their interconnections and their paradigmatic meanings in the field from which they were originally drawn. This might then be supplemented by analysis of the ways in which the original meanings become extended in their analogical uses. (Black 1962: 241)

Since, however, the term "archetype" is heavily associated with Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, I have chosen to use the longer form, "conceptual archetype," in this paper.

Conceptual Archetypes: Narratives, Phrases, and Words

With all the above mentioned notions about metaphor in mind, let us examine again the issue raised previously: how do the Chinese elites select and transform historical knowledge into useful stratagems? Such knowledge, as mentioned earlier, has been accumulated since ancient times through continuous collective efforts of Chinese elites throughout Chinese history. This massive body of knowledge is basically coded or stored in "conceptual archetypes," to use Black's term. Though no special effort has ever been made to classify these conceptual archetypes, they generally fall into three genres.

The first genre includes various short narratives of successful cases of strategic actions which have occurred in Chinese history. These narratives are by no means literal accounts; they are purposive reconstructions of what happened or is alleged to have happened. Clifford Geertz would call them "thick description" (1973: 7). Furthermore, for the sake of convenient transmission and dispensation (for a discussion of these two concepts, see Chiao 1971), parsimony is a necessary common characteristic of all narratives. As a result, only the outstanding actions

and/or sayings directly related to the strategic behavior are mentioned, often with exaggeration, or even invention. Despite their parsimonious form, narratives are not metaphors; they are models of narrative style. On the other hand, models and metaphors invoke the same type of cognitive process. In his discussion of models in behavioral science, Abraham Kaplan claims that "models have been defined as "scientific metaphors." (1964: 265) Black has made the relationship between the two more explicit:

> Use of theoretical models resembles the use of metaphors in requiring analogical transfer of a vocabulary. Metaphor and model-making reveal new relationships; both are attempts to pour new content into old bottles. (1962: 238)

Most narratives have one or more than one heroes whose extraordinary deeds may inspire the strategists to emulate them. Emulation of model personalities is an important method of learning in traditional China, as Donald J. Munro argues:

> The Chinese theory of learning assumes that people are innately capable of learning from models. This learning can occur unintentionally through the unconscious imitation of those around one....Or it can occur intentionally through the purposive attempt to duplicate the attitude and conduct of a teacher, scholar-official, or ancestor....For the Confucians, model emulation was not just one way of learning: it was by far the most efficient way, and one could inculcate any virtuous behavior in people by presenting the right model. (1969: 96)

Therefore, narratives contain firstly concrete personalities for emulation, and secondly smart stratagems for following or rhetorics for borrowing. Like other genres of "conceptual archetype," they do invoke the process of "analogical extension" in Black's term. But comparatively speaking, they require less imagination from the strategists, hence closer "extension."

There have been many collections of written narratives in Chinese history. The most famous one is probably *Zhan-guo Ce* or the *Intrigues of the Warring States* which contains 497 short narratives and is generally believed to be a textbook for the would-be elites in the Warring States period (453-221 B.C.). Both Chinese and Western specialists, however, considered the large portion of its narratives to be fictional (Crump 1964: 29-46).

Systematic compiling of narratives for strategic actions flourished in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The most notable collections were *Zhi Nang* (Package of Wisdom) by Feng Mong-long (1574-1646) and *Jingshi Qimou* (Outstanding Strategies for Managing the World) by Yu Lin. The year of completion is known as 1625 for the former, but unknown for the latter. Furthermore, there is no existing personal data about Yu Lin.

Zhi Nang includes 1085 narratives divided into ten parts. The titles of all ten parts carry the word *Zhi* (wisdom), such as *Cha Zhi* (Wisdom of Detection) and *Yu Zhi* (Wisdom of Speech). The parts are further divided into 28 volumes; each volume emphasizes an outstanding characteristic of the narratives as indicated by its title, such as Volume 3, *Tong Jian* (Simplification of Matters) and Volume 13, *Wei She* (Adaptability). The number of narratives included in each volume varies from 18 to 64 with an average of 38 narratives per volume (Feng 1988). *Jingshi Qimou* contains 632 narratives, which were divided into 19 categories according to the nature of the narratives. For example, there are such categories as *Yin Cu* (Dealing with the Unexpected) and *Ji Jian* (Fighting the Malefactors). The number of narratives in each category varies from 15 to 66 with an average of 33 narratives in each category. Two or three categories are grouped per volume. There are eight volumes in the book (Yu 1970).

In the following, I will translate two narratives, one from each of the two books, as examples:

A Narrative from *Zhi Nang*

about Adaptability

> King Zhou (of the Shang dynasty) lost count of the date because of a long night of drinking. He checked with his attendants but nobody could tell him what day it was. He then sent a messenger to check with Qi Zi. Qi Zi said to his disciples: "As the king and the whole country lost count of the date, our country is in danger. If I become known as the only person who knows the date, I'll become very vulnerable." So he told the messenger that he was also too drunk to tell the date. (Feng 1988:II:587)

A Narrative from *Jingshi Qimou* in the Category

of "Dealing with the Unexpected"

Emperor Wu of the Wei Dynasty (better known as Cao Cao) once led a troop on maneuver but lost track of water resources. His soldiers all got very thirsty. He suddenly made an announcement that there was a large forest of plum trees a short distance ahead and that there would be plenty of sweet and sour juicy plums to eat. Hearing this announcement, the soldiers all felt watery in their mouths and felt temporary relief of their thirst until they found water. (Yu 1970:162)

How useful were those narratives to a strategist? Feng Mong-long made an interesting remark in his Preface to *Zhi Nang*: "Successful use of (these narratives) depends on one's intelligence, but it is always helpful if he knows a lot of past events." (1988:I:5)

The second genre of "conceptual archetype" includes various "strategies" expressed in short phrases, mostly in three or four characters. As defined earlier, "strategies" are sets of elementary ideas or "conceptual archetypes" for building stratagems. The Chinese words for "strategy" as defined in this paper is *ji* (the fourth tone) or *cè*, combined as *jicè*. The word for "stratagem" should be *ji* (the first tone) as defined in the introduction to the famous *Sanshiliu Ji* (Thirty-Six Strategies, discussed below) according to which *ji* is a scheme which could not be formulated under hypothetical situations; it had always to be set up for a real and specific problem (Wu 1979:1-2).

Sanshiliu Ji (Thirty-Six Strategies) is the best known example of "strategies," and has been discussed in a number of my papers. Though the term per se appeared in literature as early as in the History of the Southern Qi Dynasty (479-502), compiled by Xiao Zi-xian (489-537), a book by this name containing all 36 strategies with short explanations and examples was not available until the late Ming or even the early Qing dynasty (Wu 1979:5). A modern reprint of this book was published in 1941 by a printing house in Chengtu with the subtitle *Miben Bingfa* (Secret Book of Military Art). With a few variations, most contemporary books dealing with the Thirty-Six Strategies follow this book (Chiao 1981:6-7). Thirty of the Thirty-Six

strategies contained therein are stated in four character phrases, with the other six in three character phrases. Though the book was originally meant for military operations, only a small portion of these phrases refer directly to warfare, such as Strategy 2 "*Wei wei jiu zhao*" (To besiege state Wei in order to save state Zhao). The rest may be fables, like Strategy 11: "*Li tai tao jiang*" (The plum tree dies for the peach tree); extraordinary actions, like Strategy 7: "*Wu zhong sheng you*" (To make something from nothing); dramatic behavior, like Strategy 10: "*Xiao li cang dao*" (To hide a dagger in a smile); or sneaky conduct, like Strategy 25: "*Tou liang huan zhu*" (To steal beams and pillars and replace them with rotten timber). All these phrases are highly picturesque and provide readers with wide room for imagination or "analogical extension." However, before the strategist can transform those short and vague phrases into operational stratagems, he must be familiar with the background philosophy and context. We may take Strategy 1, "*Man tien quo hai*" (To cross the sea by deceiving the Heavens) as an example to illustrate this point. Literally, the strategy only suggests the use of deception to gain one's ends. But what kind of deception and how to carry it out need to be figured out by the strategist. In his commentary on this strategy, the author of *Sanshiliu Ji* first pointed out the philosophical principle for using this strategy: *Yin* is not opposite to but within *yang*, therefore, a secretive scheme (*yin*) would be better concealed under open operation (*yang*). He then gave a good example of such an operation: when General Tai Shi-ci (166-206) planned to break the siege of the enemy to seek outside help, he first led a horse himself and carried a bow and arrow with him, while two cavaliers each carrying a target followed him. When they left the besieged city, the enemy outside the city all stood up and got ready to block them. He calmly walked to the ditch beside the city wall, erected the target and began to practice his shooting. When he finished the practice, he went back into the city. The second day he acted the same way, and only some of the enemy stood up. After he repeated the same procedure several more times, the enemy stopped paying him any attention. One morning he got himself well-equipped and had breakfast earlier; once he got outside

the city gate, he jumped on his horse and rode it speedily through the enemy. By the time the enemy was aware of it, he was already a long distance away from them (Wu 1979:7).

In 1956, Mao Zedong launched the famous Hundred Flower Movement, in which he encouraged all intellectuals to speak freely their mind and assured them that nobody would be punished for their criticism of his government. But the following year he suddenly began a nation-wide Anti-Rightist Campaign to purge all those who had dared speak out. It was said that when people complained that the whole thing was a "*yin*" scheme, his only reply was that it was a "*yang*" not a "*yin*" scheme. Such a remark indicated that he had thorough knowledge for using this strategy. In fact, this kind of background knowledge is essential for the strategist to making any of those strategies expressed in short phrases useful.

The third genre of conceptual archetype refers to the strategies expressed by single or in a few cases, double character words. John K. Fairbank observed that the use of ideographic script gave Chinese characters "independent status" and greater "tyranny" than alphabetic writings (1962:64). Two rather special Chinese practices support Fairbank's observation: One is a kind of divination in which a person's fortune is told by the character that he has written down. Another is the chanting of a series of single characters as a means for invoking magical power. These characters are known as *zhou* (incantations) in Buddhism or *zhen yan* (true words) in Taoism. Perhaps it was this kind of religious use of single character words that enabled these words to become conceptual archetypes for strategies. Whatever their origin, strategies of this type were developed much later than those of the other two types. In his well known book *Houheixue* (Black and Thick Principles), first published in 1934, Li Zhong-wu proposed twelve single character words which he called *zhen yan* (true words) to represent six effective strategies for obtaining an office and six for maintaining it (1962:20-25). The fourth and fifth strategies in the former category, for example, were represented by the single character words *Peng* and *Kong* respectively. *Peng* literally means to hold in both

hands, and hence figuratively implies flattering. *Kong*, on the other hand, means to intimidate. Li believed that these two strategies should be applied alternately upon a person who has the power to appoint the strategist to an office. The use of *Kong* strategy, of course, should be pursued with extreme caution. The ideal balance to be achieved was that on the one hand, the target person became very appreciative of the flattering actions of the strategist, but on the other hand, the former received a clear message that if he failed to grant the strategist's request, he could be harmed. *Peng*, flattering, and *Kong*, intimidation, should therefore be employed complementarily rather than exclusively, i.e., intimidating messages ought to be wrapped in words of flattery and vice versa (1962:21-22).

Strategies of single character words have become increasingly popular in contemporary Chinese society whether in Mainland China, in Hong Kong or in Taiwan, though the words used sometime vary from one region to another. Let me discuss two widely-used examples of contemporary usage of strategies of this type:

Tui: *Tui* means to push away. It refers to various actions in which the strategist pushes an assignment or a request away from himself and on to other people. There are quite a few metaphorical phrases about this strategy, related to sports such as *ti pijiu* (Ball kicking), and *da taiji* (Shadow Boxing).

Tuo: *Tuo* means to delay or to drag on. It is often used as a tactic to deal with a difficult problem that has no immediate solution. Putting off the solution, it is believed, may reduce the importance of the problem and make it easier to solve. This tactic is often called *Tuozijue* (The formula of *tuo*).

Rules of Strategic Behavior

A successful strategist must possess two sets of knowledge. The first set of knowledge concerns how to formulate effective stratagems such as those we have discussed; the second set concerns how to skillfully apply these stratagems. In one of my earlier papers, I discussed nine principles or rules for such application: (1) take precautions, (2) be on guard against everyone on all occasions, (3) save face for others, if possible, (4) be ruthless, (5) be forbearing, (6) be kind in words and

gesture, (7) put yourself in an advantageous position, (8) adopt a long-term plan, and
(9) maintain tenderness or flexibility (1989:525-28).

I further identified these nine principles as the pragmatic rules described by
F.G. Bailey (1970:3-6). Bailey makes a distinction between two kinds of rules in
any orderly politics, normative and pragmatic:

> Normative rules are very general guides to conduct; they are
> used to judge particular actions ethically right or wrong; and
> within a particular political structure they can be used to
> justify *publicly* a course of conduct.
>
> Pragmatic rules are statements not about whether a
> particular line of conduct is just or unjust, but about whether
> or not it will be effective. (1970:5-6)

I find Bailey's distinction between these two kinds of rules useful for the present
study. Bailey, however, thinks that pragmatic rules also include

> The further directives which....recommend tactics and
> manoeuvres as likely to be the most efficient: whether
> the scrum shall pack 3-2-3 or 3-4-1, in what conditions
> to bring on the slow bowlers, whether to box
> defensively or aggressively, how to dress when being
> interviewed by one's sponsor, and so forth. (Ibid)

Here he fails to see the distinction between the means and the rules for using the
means, or between the stratagems as defined above and the rules for applying them.
I made a similar mistake in my earlier paper (1989:529), but I now think it is
important to maintain such distinction.

How to maintain a balance between normative and pragmatic rules is a
delicate question to Chinese elites. Chinese do not regard these two kinds of rules as
opposite or mutually exclusive. Instead, they consider them complementary, and
able to coexist in the same entity. Chinese usually describe those who hold high
moral principles or normative rules as "square" while those who are pragmatic are
described as "round". Furthermore, a person may be square in his interior (mind)
but round in his exterior (appearance), or vice versa. Thus, a columnist observed
that there are four different types of persons (Situ 1982:11) which may summerized
as follows:

Diagram 2: "Round" (Pragmatic) vs. "Square" (Normative) Types of Persons

	Interior	Exterior		Overall
Type 1	□	○	=	� (round with square inside)
Type 2	○	□	=	▢ (square with circle inside)
Type 3	□	□	=	▢ (square with square inside)
Type 4	○	○	=	◎ (circle with circle inside)

□ = Square   ○ = Round

The columnist only appreciated persons of Type 1 and rejected the other three types. To him, Type 3 was just as unacceptable as Types 2 and 4. (Ibid)

Concluding Remarks

I have outlined a conceptual framework for studying the strategic behavior of Chinese political elites on the basis of three cardinal concepts--social dramas, arena and metaphor. With this conceptual framework, I set forth a general discussion of the mind and behavior of Chinese elites in formulating and applying various stratagems. It is the latter, I propose, that could be the starting point for empirical studies of this subject in the future. In this respect, another master of dramaturgical theory, Erving Goffman, may furnish useful ideas. I tend to agree with Clifford Geertz that Goffman's writings rest "almost entirely on the game analogy" (1983:24), and with his comment:

> Goffman also employs the language of the stage quite extensively, but as his view of the theater is that it is an oddly mannered kind of interaction game--ping-pong in masks--his work is not, at base, really dramaturgical. (ibid)

Since, however, Goffman's main domain of inquiry was consistently the day-to-day and face-to-face behavior of individuals, his writings are directly relevant to the analysis of strategic behavior. Furthermore he strongly emphasized that "ad hoc observation, cultivation of anecdotes, creative thinking, illustrations from literature, examination of books of etiquette, personal experiences, and many other sources of

unsystematic data should guide inquiry into the micro order" (Turner 1991:449). Such an approach is essential to micro-level research on strategic behavior. Goffman's major works from his first--*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) to his last--*Frame Analysis* (1974) constitute an invaluable resource of guidelines for empirical studies of the strategic behavior of Chinese political elites.

Acknowledgements

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