

## WENXIN DIAOLONG IN THE HISTORICAL WORKS OF CHINESE LITERATURE IN MODERN JAPAN

Shuting Kou\*

*Abstract: The acceptance and dissemination of Wenxin Diaolong overseas is an important proof of the international influence of Chinese culture. As early as the Tang Dynasty, Wenxin Diaolong had already spread eastward to Japan. The long history of the dissemination of Wenxin Diaolong started with the History of Chinese Literature in Japan in 1897 when it was published in the Meiji period by Kojyou Sadakichi. Subsequently, there emerged some great scholars of the studies of Wenxin Diaolong, like Suzuki Torao and Toda Hiroshiakatuki. Modern Japanese scholars have studied Wenxin Diaolong in many ways, both macroscopically and at the micro level. In particular, the characterization of the work's genre and its historical status is an essential reference for Chinese scholars: Japanese scholars first identified Wenxin Diaolong as "Six Dynasties prose" and "critical literature" and later praised it as "a masterpiece of the thinking of rhetoric," and finally called it "the culmination of early Chinese literary criticism."*

Written during the Qi and Liang periods (the Northern and Southern Dynasties), Liu Xie's *Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龙 was the first systematic book of literary theory in the history of China. With the successful development of overseas Chinese studies, the dissemination of *Wenxin Diaolong* has become a great topic, and the fever of studies on it has been enduring. As early as the Tang Dynasty, *Wenxin Diaolong* had already spread overseas, and the famous Japanese monk Kuukai discussed it in his "Wenjing Mifu Lun." Another Japanese scholar, Fujiwara Kasukuyo, also included it in his *Nihonkoku genzai shomokuroku*. In 1731, two editions of *Wenxin Diaolong* appeared in Japan: the *Syoukodou Wooden Type* and *Okashiroma Revised*. It can be seen that *Wenxin Diaolong* has been disseminated in Japan for more than one thousand years.

Japanese scholars began writing about *Wenxin Diaolong* in the studies of the history of Chinese literature during the *Meiji* period nearly one hundred and forty years ago. The first work on the history of Chinese literature in Japan was *A Brief History of Ancient Chinese Literature*, written by Suematsu Kentyou in 1882, which initiated the writing of a history of Chinese literature by Japanese scholars. However, since this book only deals with the literature of the pre-Qin period, *Wenxin Diaolong* is not included in its discussion.

The first literary history work that referred to and commented on *Wenxin Diaolong* is Kojyou Sadakichi's *A Brief History of Chinese Literature*, published in 1897. For the 120 years since 1897, Japanese scholars have written more than 70 literary histories of Chinese literature, in which they have commented on *Wenxin Diaolong* to varying degrees. According to the Japanese researcher Kadowaki Hirofumi in his book *Wenxin Diaolong Studies* (Hirofumi, 2005. 440-441), 22

---

\* Dr. SHUTING KOU, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature & Japanese Literature, School of Literature & Journalism, Sichuan University, Chengdu, China. Email: [koushuting@live.cn](mailto:koushuting@live.cn)

works of Chinese literary history in modern Japan (1868-1945) have comments on *Wenxin Diaolong*, including the books by scholars like Suzuki Torao, Toda Hiroshiakatuki, and Aoki Masaru. However, the author found that many of these works, such as Sasakawa Syurou's *History of Chinese Literature* (1898), Nakaneyoshi's *The Brief History of Chinese Literature* (1900), and Shiotani Atushi's *An Introduction to Chinese Literature* (1919), do not mention *Wenxin Diaolong*. The studies on *Wenxin Diaolong* have become a hot topic in literary theories. However, the Chinese and Japanese scholars have not yet conducted any detailed research on this subject from the perspective of the works on the history of Chinese literature written by Japanese scholars. This paper takes the works on the history of Chinese literature in modern Japan as the object of study, analyzes the reviews and studies on *Wenxin Diaolong*, and tries to present the dissemination pattern of *Wenxin Diaolong* in modern Japan and its status and influence in history of Japanese literature. The reason for choosing literary-historical works as the research perspective is that the general characteristics of historical works, namely objectivity, historicity, knowledge, and authority, are taken into account, and their commentaries on *Wenxin Diaolong* are the most representative of its dissemination and acceptance in Japan.

#### I. An Overview of the Study of *Wenxin Diaolong* in Chinese Literary Histories in Modern Japan

The study of *Wenxin Diaolong* in modern Japan has gone through *three periods*: *Meiji*, *Taisho*, and *Showa*. The *Meiji* period is the beginning stage of the study of *Wenxin Diaolong* in modern Japanese studies of Chinese literary history.

Japanese scholar Suematsu Kentyou's *A Brief History of Ancient Chinese Literature* (1882) was Japan's first literary history work, divided into two volumes. The author's concept of "ancient literature" refers to the literature of the pre-Qin dynasty, and the scope of his selections is the literature of China from the Qin Dynasty backward, so it is not possible to cover *Wenxin Diaolong* that appeared in the Qi and Liang periods in Northern and Southern Dynasties.

The first piece of Japanese comments on Liu Xie and his *Wenxin Diaolong* was made by Kojyou Sadakichi, whose *History of Chinese Literature* (1897) is the first general history of Chinese literature in Japan and even in the whole world. In the third chapter of the work, Kojyou introduces Liu's life and the structure of the *Wenxin Diaolong*: "The twenty-five essays below the Yuandao (原道) deal with the system of writing, while the twenty-four essays below the Shensi (神似) are rhetorical treatises, and one essay, "The Preface" (序志), deals with the reasons for writing the book." (Sadakichi, 1897, 295) In addition, Kozyo also pointed out that the ancient Chinese essays and poems have flourished since the Han and Wei dynasties, and the method of essays became mature by the Jian'an and Huangchu periods. Liu's *Wenxin Diaolong* was the first to explore the origin and merits of the literary style, and its lines used the then-popular form of verse, with a summary at the end of each piece, which is the unique style of the book. Although Kozyo's commentary on *Wenxin Diaolong* is brief, it is a landmark literary event, namely, the beginning of the study of *Wenxin Diaolong* in the history of Japanese literature.

Some other works on the literary history of *Wenxin Diaolong* in this period include Kubo Tennzui's *A History of Chinese Literature* (1903) and Kojima Kennkitirou's *The Ancient History of Chinese Literature* (1909). Kubo Tennzui (1875-1935), whose real name was Kubo Tokuji, was a Japanese researcher of Chinese literature who graduated from the Department of Chinese Studies at Tokyo Imperial University in 1899 and later became a professor at Taipei Imperial University. In his book *A History of Chinese Literature*, Kubo compares *Wenxin Diaolong* with Prince Zhaoming's *Wenxuan* (《文选》) and Zhong Rong's *Shipin* (《诗品》), regarding them as the symbols of the flourishing literary movement during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, but giving no detailed introduction or evaluation of *Wenxin Diaolong* itself. In addition, Kojima Kennkitirou's account of *Wenxin Diaolong* in his *Ancient History of Chinese Literature* is almost identical to that of Kojyo. However, he only briefly introduces the work's composition and lists the titles of fifty chapters. Kojima Kennkitirou (1866-1931), who graduated from the Department of Classics in the Faculty of Arts at Tokyo Imperial University in 1888, was a researcher of Chinese literature in Japan and was then a professor at Tokyo Imperial University and the president of Futamatsu Gakusha University. In his *Ancient History of Chinese Literature*, he noted that "Zhong Rong's *Shipin* (《诗品》) and Liu Xie's *Wenxin Diaolong* are the masterpieces of contemporary critical literature in China." It should be explained here that "contemporary" refers to the period in which Zhong and Liu were writing, and "critical literature" is a particular term used by Japanese scholars for critical treatises with literary characteristics (more detailed later). As seen clearly, this period of Japanese literary studies remains at the stage of introduction and commentary on *Wenxin Diaolong*, and the focus of attention is limited to the structure of the text.

Secondly, the study of *Wenxin Diaolong* in its true sense emerged in the Taisho period in Japanese literary history with Suzuki Torao. In his "Outline of Chinese Literature" (1912), Kojima Kennkitirou not only gave a detailed discussion of the *Wenxuan* (《文选》) but also commented on *Wenxin Diaolong*. He pointed out that Liu's *Wenxin Diaolong* and Zhong's *Shipin* were "the originators of critical literature in this period and are good sources in the history of literature" (Kennkitirou, 1912, 151-152). In his *Survey of Chinese Literature: The Second on Verse* (1922), he again deals with *Wenxin Diaolong*; he comments briefly: "*Wenxin Diaolong* of Liu Xie holds that the will in the heart is the poem in the speech, so it is clear that in the rhetorical era, the poet was still based on emotion and mainly on will." It is clear from this that Kojima's definition of the literary genre of *Wenxin Diaolong* is "critical literature." With Suzuki Torao's influence in Japanese academia, the study of *Wenxin Diaolong* entered a new stage in modern Japan. Suzuki Torao (1878-1963) was born in Asuojin (now Yoshida-cho), Nishi-Kawara-gun, Niigata, Japan, where his grandfather, Suzuki Bundai, and his father, Suzuki Tige Kenn, were both sinologists. His grandfather founded a local private school called "Nagayoshikan," which was dedicated to teaching Chinese studies and later succeeded by his father, who trained thousands of students. Suzuki graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1900 with a degree in Chinese literature. In 1908, on the recommendation of Kanou Naoki, he became an assistant professor at Kyoto Imperial University, where he taught a course on Chinese literature and was honored as "the top one to study Chinese literature." In his *His-*

*tory of Chinese Poetics* (1925), Suzuki conducted a highly detailed study of Liu Xie and his work. In the same period, Suzuki's *The Dunhuang Text of Wenxin Diaolong* (1926) and *The Huang Shulin Text of Wenxin Diaolong* (1928) laid a solid foundation for the development of the area in Japan. They made an essential contribution to the study of *Wenxin Diaolong*.

Third, the study of *Wenxin Diaolong* in Japanese literary and historical works of the Showa period is mainly represented by Aoki Masaru and Toda Hiroshiakatuki. Aoki Masaru (1887-1964) was a famous Japanese sinologist who graduated from the Department of Chinese Philosophy and Literature at Kyoto Imperial University in 1911. He studied under such famous sinologists as Kanou Naoki and Suzuki Torao. After graduating from Kyoto University, he taught at Doshisha University. In 1919, he formed the "Reisawasya" with his classmates Kojima Yuuba and Honda Shigeyuki and founded the *Journal of Sinology*. Aoki Masaru is regarded as "the leading Japanese scholar of Chinese literature." In his *History of Chinese Literary Thought* (1943), he gave an insightful evaluation of Liu and his *Wenxin Diaolong*. Aoki's major field of study was Chinese opera, and his interest in *Wenxin Diaolong* was partly due to its importance in the history of literature and partly due to the influence of his teacher, Suzuki Torao, and others. In addition, Toda Hiroshiakatuki (1910- ), a famous Japanese scholar and professor at Rissho University, has devoted himself to studying *Wenxin Diaolong* for a long time and achieved fruitful results. His first research paper on the work, "The Modern Significance of the Chapter Lianzi (练字) of *Wenxin Diaolong*," was published in 1942 in *Siwen*, Part II, 4, No. 11, followed in August 1943 by "The Construction of the Writings of the Way from *Wenxin Diaolong*" (Rissho University Series, No. 8 (Literature, No. 3). Both articles were subsequently included in his study of the *Survey of Chinese Literature* (Kyuukosyoinn, 1987). Regarding Toda's study of *Wenxin Diaolong*, Yang Mingzhao, a famous Chinese scholar, commented that Toda was "more than a match for his predecessors, Suzuki Torao, ShibaRokurou, and Yoshikawa Koujirou." In 1985, Toda published his research results of more than forty years in a book entitled *Studies on Wenxin Diaolong* in Japan, which had a substantial impact on the academic community and attracted the attention of Chinese scholars such as Mr. Wang Yuanhua, who actively promoted the translation of the book into Chinese and its publication in China in 1987.

## II. Three Main Representatives of the Studies on *Wenxin Diaolong* in Modern Japan

### 1. Suzuki Torao and his *History of Chinese Poetics*

In his *History of Chinese Poetics* (1925), Suzuki Torao argues that the twenty-five essays in the first part of *Wenxin Diaolong* belong to the theory of genre, and the twenty-four essays in the second part are about the principles of rhetoric, so the whole book is the theory of genre and the theory of rhetoric. Suzuki's explanation is mainly given to the rhetorical theory in the second part. Suzuki's analysis of the relationship between the Writings and the Way in *Wenxin Diaolong* suggests that "Liu Xie did not directly say that 'the Way is the Writing', but the content in the chapter of 'Original Way' implies that Liu's intention is undoubtedly this. He sees the text as a commendation of morality" (Torao, 1925, 97). In

what follows, Suzuki explains the chapter of “Shensi” (神思) and its subsequent chapters and analyzes some of them in detail. Suzuki argues that the two chapters “Chengqi” (程器) and “Preface” (序志) clarify the purpose of Liu’s book and his ambition and that the two chapters “Yinxiu” (隐秀) and “General Technique” (总术) are difficult to be classified into specific categories. The other three chapters, “Shixu” (时序), “Cailue” (才略), and “Zhiyin” (知音), are related to historical critics. The rest of the essays are all about rhetorical principles and methods. At the same time, Suzuki argues that Liu’s *Wenxin Diaolong* complements Lu Ji’s *Wen Fu* for some of its imperfections. Suzuki points out that “Liu’s understanding of the spirit of Confucianism was thorough, that writing and career could not be acquired at the same time, that a man of letters should cultivate virtue, and that he, as other Confucians had done, should not mix literature with morality. Liu inherited Prince Zhaoming’s ideas, and his fundamental ideas about literature fit with that of Prince Zhaoming.” (Ibid., 110) From these commentary words, it is clear that Suzuki himself was opposed to mixing literature with morality.

Suzuki goes on to point out that Liu, in order to discuss rhetoric, put great efforts into the chapters “Qingcai” (情采) and “Yangqi” (养气) and advocated that force should be the primary focus as well as nature and that literary decoration should be put into the second place. These are the necessary conditions for the unified exposition in the chapter of “Rongcai” (熔裁). In addition, Liu also discusses diction, sound, rhythm, parallelism, comparison, ancient language and events, word forms, and so on. Therefore it can be said that he pays attention to all the noteworthy aspects of Chinese literature. Suzuki gives high remarks to Liu’s *Wenxin Diaolong*, saying: “If there is room for later interpretation in the subtleties, Liu’s extraordinary insight has not been surpassed to date.” (Ibid., 110-111) Finally, Suzuki asserts, “*Wenxin Diaolong* by Liu followed the fashion of the times and used the style of verse. In the Tang dynasty, Liu Zhiji wrote *The General History*, which was also written in this style. Both of the two works can be considered as mast pieces in literature and history respectively.” It can be seen that Suzuki’s admiration for the *Wenxin Diaolong* is high from its content to its form.

## 2. Aoki Masaru and his *History of Chinese Literary Thought*

In his *History of Chinese Literary Thought* (1943), Aoki Masaru points out that *Wenxin Diaolong* was “a ideal theory under the trend of rhetoric in the Qi and Liang periods.” (Masaru, 1943, 80) Aoki’s division of the structure of *Wenxin Diaolong* differs from that of his teacher Suzuki Torao, who argues that the four chapters from the “Original Way” (原道) to the “Zhengwei” (正纬) deal mainly with the origin of literature, while the twenty-one chapters from “Biansao” (辨骚) to “Shuji” (书记) deal with the various genres of literature and their differences. The five chapters from “Shensi” (神思) to “Dingshi” (定势) talk about the basis of literary creation. The ten essays, from “Qingcai” (情采) to “Yinxiu” (隐秀), are on rhetorical theory. Moreover, the chapters from “Zhixia” (指瑕) to “Chengqi” (程器) treat the key issues of prose writing. The final chapter, “Xuzhi” (序志), is a preface, though ordered in the last place.

Aoki holds that *Wenxin Diaolong* represents its contemporary “Rhetoricism” on the one hand. On the other, it reflects the author’s intention to rectify the

flashy rhetoric opposed by the Confucian literary theory of the Han Dynasty. That is to say, Liu Xie was in the midst of the rhetorical trend of his time, but at the same time, he had his own vigilance and introspection. Unlike Confucianism in the Han Dynasty, which holds that “virtue is the root of literature,” Aoki believes that literature has value because it helps spread Confucian classics and that the Six Classics are the root of literature and should therefore be included in literature. Regarding the origin of literature, in Aoki’s view, there are three kinds of literature: “the literature of the Way,” “the literature of humanity,” and “the literature of speech.” It is the “literature of the Way,” according to which people create the “humanities.” Moreover, the root of humanities is Taiji, and the theory for studying Taiji is *Yi*. Therefore, among the Six Classics, *Yi* is the primary source. The beginning of the *Yi* was the Universe, and Confucius proposed “literature carries on the Way,” which is the heart of heaven and earth. After that, the Six Classics were the basis of literature, as they were followed by the classics, including the Book of Songs (《诗经》) and the Book of History (《书经》). As for the theory of literary creation, Aoki points out that Liu does not “Feng” (风) and “Gu” (骨). However, if speculating on their meaning, it can be argued that the former is the reaction of the author’s lively spirit, and the latter is the rhetoric and that “Feng” here is slightly similar to the “Qi” as Cao Pi called.

It is worth noting that, unlike Confucianism, which advocates “virtue as the root of literature,” Aoki believes that the Six Classics are the root of literature and the Six Classics are rooted in the Way. Therefore, it can be said that Aoki’s understanding of the relationship between literature and virtue has advanced considerably compared to that of his teacher Suzuki Torao.

### 3. Toda Hiroshiakatuki and his early studies of *Wenxin Diaolong*

In his article “The Modern Significance of the Chapter ‘Lianzi’ of *Wenxin Diaolong*” (1942), Toda discussed five aspects: the rhetorical significance of the morphology and phonology of Chinese characters, the literary theory of the chapter “Lianzi,” the four taboos of Chinese morphology, the analysis and synthesis of the theory of morphology, phonology, and semantics in the Chinese language, and the usefulness and limits of the four taboos in Japanese.

In his essay, Toda points out that words are the first condition for writing good sentences and that to write eloquent prose, it is necessary to practice the choice of words with correct knowledge. During the Six Dynasties period in China, the astonishing development of literary theory benefited from studying the form, sound, and meaning of Chinese characters as an integral part of rhetoric and literary criticism. Thus, Toda discusses an essential part of literary theory, namely, the theory of character form, which is dealt with in the chapter “Lianzi” in *Wenxin Diaolong*. In the four taboos of character form, Toda mentions Liu’s four taboos of character form, namely, “the rarely used characters,” “same side characters,” “repetition of characters,” and “strokes of characters.” Toda holds that Liu only criticized the first “the rarely used characters” as defective (Hiroshiakatuki, 1987, 65) Huang Shulin’s notes on *Wenxin Diaolong* only mention three cases of connection, but not “repetition of characters” and “strokes of characters” because judging whether the form of a character is bizarre is purely subjective; it is difficult to come to a mutually agreed assertion. However, there is a common and purely objective criterion for judging the three: “same side characters,” “repeti-

tion of characters,” and “strokes of characters.” As for the four taboos in Japanese notation, Toda points out that “repetition of characters” and “strokes of characters” apply to Japanese literature. (Ibid., 68-69) The use of Kana, a simple character with simple strokes, and Kanji, a complex character with complex strokes, is already aesthetically pleasing. Although not all of Liu’s four principles of character apply to Japanese literature, his suggestion that the beauty of a literary work’s characters is somehow critically related to the merits of that work. It is remarkable for the rhetorical theory of Liu Xie that often governs the evaluation of prose writing. At the end of his article, Toda emphasizes that the Ministry of Education of Japan should not ignore the rhetorical theory of the beauty of characters when formulating new, commonly used Kanji. In this sense, the chapter “Lianzi” of *Wenxin Diaolong* remains alive today.

In the article “The Construction of the Doctrine of Literature Carrying on the Way from *Wenxin Diaolong*” (1943), Toda points out that Liu Xie was a believer in the doctrine of literature carrying on the Way. Therefore, according to him, by surveying this idea through the fifty essays of *Wenxin Diaolong*, one can present the system of Liu’s thought and see the complete picture of Liu’s adherence to the idea. In this regard, Toda discusses four aspects: literature and the Five Classics, literature as a tool for conducting affairs, the six meanings as a measure of literary criticism, and the moral theory of the literati. In this article, Toda points out that Liu’s view of literature is that literature carries on the Way, where the Way is the natural law of the heaven and the earth. Literature is the manifestation of the Way. From the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the rivers, the forest, animals, the springs, and the rocks, all of them are the “literature” that appears as the Way. Moreover, human beings compare literature to heaven, and the earth, unifying all of them, and then the humanities are born. In the meantime, knowledge begins to unfold to the mind, and the mind is created as the text of human speech, that is, the text of the speech. The “text of speech” is the article or even literature. At this point, the Way also transformed from the Way of the natural laws of the heaven and the earth to the Way of the Sage. For Liu Xie, “humanities” as the root of “language and literature” originally started from Taiji. Yiching is the reason for investigating Taiji, so among the Five Classics, *Yi* is the most important one, and the *Book of Songs*, the *Book of History*, the *Book of Rites*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* are all derived from *Yi*.

He also points out that Liu held a utilitarian view of literature and believed that all literature originated from the classics and that the source of all texts could be found in the classics, thus giving rise to a tendency toward antiquarianism in literary thought. For Liu, the personality of the writer was of particular significance. The requirements for the writer’s personality were self-evidently Confucian morality, including the inner spiritual aspects of the writer’s philosophy, religion, and attitude toward life, and beyond the ethical norms that were equally required of ordinary scholars.

In the above two articles, Toda focuses on the chapter on “Lianzi” in *Wenxin Diaolong* and the doctrine of literature carrying on the Way, which are the results of his initial research on the work. From this, Toda grew as another great scholar of the study of *Wenxin Diaolong* in Japan after Suzuki Torao and Kozen Hiroshi.

### III. The Stylistic Characterization and Historical Position of *Wenxin Diaolong* in the Study of Chinese Literary History in Modern Japan

#### 1. From “Six Dynasties Prose” to “Critical Literature.”

The first commentary on Liu and his *Wenxin Diaolong* in modern Japanese literary history is made by Kojyo Sadakichi. In Chapter 3 of his *History of Chinese Literature* (1897), “Six Dynasties Prose,” he introduces Liu’s life and the structure of *Wenxin Diaolong*. Kojyo categorized the work as prose, which means that he regarded prose of literary theories as literary prose. It is a different view from the one we have today. Later on, in his book *The Great Chinese Literary History in Ancient Times* (1909), Kojima Kennkitirou praised *Wenxin Diaolong* as “a masterpiece of contemporary critical literature.” (Kennkitirou, 1909, 1089) In another work, *Outline of the History of Chinese Literature* (1912), he again emphasized that Liu’s *Wenxin Diaolong* was the “originator of critical literature” in this period (Kennkitirou, 1912, 151-152). It is the same lineage as that of Kojyo; that is to say, *Wenxin Diaolong* is “literary criticism” (theory) in content but “critical literature” (works) in form. *The criticism takes the form of literature and thus has the nature and characteristics of literature.*

In addition, Toda Hiroshiakatuki, in his *A Short History of the Study of Wenxin Diaolong*, also points out that the first person in Japan to consider the influence of *Wenxin Diaolong* on Japanese literature was Tsuchida Yukimura, who discussed the relationship between the *Preface to the Ancient and Modern Song* (古今集序) and *Wenxin Diaolong* in chapter 8 of his 1928 book *The Occurrence of Literature (The Philosophical Study of National Literature, vol. 2)*, entitled “The Occurrence of Critical Literature and Its Sources” (Hiroshiakatuki, 1987, 13). It can be seen that Tsuchida also classifies the *Wenxin Diaolong* as “critical literature.”

Chinese scholar Zhang Zhiping points out that critical literature has a long history in China and that “ancient literary critics started the tradition of using poetry as a means of evaluating and interpreting poetry. These poems are authentic and pure ‘critical literature,’ in which the critic uses the poem as a tool to graphically describe the author’s creative personality and the unique style of the work, to realistically depict natural scenery, to vividly portray artistic images, and at the same time to express his thoughts and feelings in a straightforward or euphemistic manner” (Zhang, 2016, no.5). It is a good argument, but it must be pointed out that although there is critical literature in the history of Chinese literature, there is no such concept. According to Zhang Zhiping, the closest thing to the concept of “critical literature” in China is Zhou Zuoren’s “Beautiful Writings.” In his article “Beautiful Literature,” published in a supplement to *Morning Edition* on June 8, 1921, Zhou pointed out, “There is a so-called essay in foreign literature, of which there are about two types. The first is critical, which is scholarly. The second is artistic, also known as beautiful literature, which can be divided into narrative and lyric, but also many of the two mixed. For the “beautiful literature,” as Zhou Zuoren called, Zhang Zhiping explained, “He [Zhou] said ‘beautiful literature’ is a short, extensive, lively form, not narrative and reasoning but mainly lyrical. It includes ‘critical literature.’” (Ibid., 30-31) Zhou Zuoren’s original intention is distorted here, and it is essential to highlight that Zhou’s intention in writing this article was to encourage people who were dealing with new



literature to try “artistic essays.” The so-called “beautiful literature” has “many ideas” and is combined with the “artistic” style of novels, poems, and other literary genres. It is precisely what “critical literature” is all about. Zhou Zuoren is an expert in Japanese literature, so the “foreign literature” mentioned in this article should include Japanese literature. Although he only talks about “beautiful literature” in European literature and does not mention “critical literature” in Japanese literature. It would be inconceivable to say that Zhou is unfamiliar with the concept of “critical literature” in Japan.

Zhang lists ancient Chinese “critical literature” representative works” and considers Liu’s *Wenxin Diaolong* a model. Regarding the relationship between “critical literature” and prose, Zhang argues, “In terms of style, some of Chinese ‘critical literature’ since the May Fourth Movement are written in prose while some of it appear as lyrical prose.” (Zhang, 2016, no.5) It can be seen that prose and “critical literature” have a unified relationship. It is reasonable for Koyzo to assign *Wenxin Diaolong* to the genre of prose, as mentioned above. In any case, it is the consensus of Chinese and Japanese scholars to regard *Wenxin Diaolong* as “critical literature.”

## 2. *Wenxin Diaolong* as a masterpiece of rhetorical literary trend

In his *History of Chinese Literary Thought* (1943), Aoki Masaru pointed out that *Wenxin Diaolong* was “a masterpiece of rhetorical literary trend of thought” in the Qi and Liang periods (Masaru, 1943, 78) According to him, Chinese literary thought has undergone three changes so far: the “Age of Practical Entertainment” from the remote times to the Han Dynasty, the “Age of Literary Supremacy” from the Six Dynasties to the Tang Dynasty, and the “Age of Imitating the Ancient” from the Song Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty (Ibid., 12-13). At the same time, Aoki summarizes the development of Chinese literature using three literary philosophies, namely, “Expressionism,” “Emotionalism,” and “Rhetoricism.” With regard to “Rhetoricism,” he considers the period of the budding of Rhetoricism is in the Qin and Han Dynasties, the prosperous period of it in the Wei, Jin, and Six Dynasties and the Sui and Tang Dynasties, and the period of competition between Expressionism and Rhetoricism in the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties.

Moreover, Rhetoricism” and “Expressionism” form a set of opposing trends; as Aoki points out, “If we seek rhetorical style, we need to take literary ornaments; if it is only to achieve the expression of meaning, then simplicity is sufficient. And if you can achieve both, it is the best. However, generally speaking, most of the literature are either rich in this and sparse in the other, or vice versa. For this reason, from ancient times to the present, there are often two opposing schools of thought in literature.” (Ibid., 21-22) However, influenced by Confucianism and Taoism, the tradition of the history of Chinese literary thought disvalues and opposes rhetoric and sees the rhetoric to bring detriment to meaning, and even believes that floating words are close to moral corruption. In this regard, the Chinese scholar Li Yong hit the nail on the head: “The elevation of ‘Rhetoricism’ that was originally on the periphery of Chinese literary thought to a position paralleled to ‘Expressionism’ implies a critique of Confucianism’s pragmatic view of literature and art. Both Aoki Masaru and his mentor Suzuki Torao (1878-1963) opposed the moral and ethical approach to literary criticism.” (Li, 2019, no.6)

This assertion confirms Suzuki's opposition to "mixing literature with morality" and Aoki's opposition to Confucianism's "virtue as the foundation of literature."

Aoki's view of literature as "Rhetoricism" is similar to that of the Kyoto School's Kouzen Hiroshi, who argued that the literary style of *Wenxin Diaolong* is "literature as ornamentation" (Hiroshi, 1984, 120). However, Kouzen adds, "There is probably no dispute that Liu's essays are the ultimate in literary beauty." (Ibid.) However, "Liu's writings do not give full credit to such literature of the Six Dynasties, especially of the Qi and Liang periods, nor do they seek the principles of Liu's creative activity. It is true that the literary history of Qi and Liang was magnificent and decorative, but this original magnificence was not a 'Rhetoricism' that was vague and with no content, but a truly magnificent and decorative literature that was full of content." (Ibid., 121) It is evident that Kouzen does not fully agree with Aoki's statement that *Wenxin Diaolong* is "a masterpiece of rhetorical literary trend of thought," but that although *Wenxin Diaolong* is magnificent in the decoration of language, its text is not harmful to its quality. *Wenxin Diaolong* cannot be equated with a work of rhetoric fully.

As early as 1922, Chinese scholar Yang Honglie suggested in his article "A Study of *Wenxin Diaolong*" that "the work should be read as a book of rhetoric" (Yang, 1922). In this regard, contemporary scholar Qi Liangde points out that it was a common view at the time to regard *Wenxin Diaolong* as a book of rhetoric (Qi, 2007, 2). The "rhetorical book" here is similar to what Aoki called "Rhetoricism," but it is not quite the same. The "rhetorical book," as Yang Honglie calls it, has a technical and methodological meaning.

### 3. *Wenxin Diaolong* as "the peak of early Chinese literary criticism"

In his article "The Modern Significance of the Chapter 'Lianzi' of *Wenxin Diaolong*" (1942), Toda Hiroshiakutuki praised Liu's *Wenxin Diaolong* and Zhong Rong's *Shi Pin* as "the highest peaks of early Chinese literary criticism." The meaning of the terms "early," "Chinese," and "literary criticism" was explained in Toda's later book, *Survey of Chinese Literary*. He says that criticism is a psychologically instinctive impulse, an externalization of the subject and that when we objectify literature as an object, "literary criticism" (note: Toda's term "literary criticism" is synonymous with "literary commentary") as an object of study came into being. In China, "literary criticism" can be traced back to ancient times, but its content is simple and naive, and the materials available for study are relatively scarce. Moreover, criticism includes interpretation, and textual criticism is used in literary research, and in this sense, the Han and Qing Dynasties were the heyday of criticism. However, literary criticism, in this sense, is always individual, scattered, and limited. Only when such individual and fragmented studies are integrated into a comprehensive organic unity for appreciation and even judgment and finally come to an inevitable conclusion can such criticism be considered "literary criticism" in the standard sense. According to Toda, literary criticism in this sense appeared in China after the Wei and Jin Dynasties. Therefore, strictly speaking, the history of Chinese literary criticism should be written from the Wei and Jin dynasties. It is why Toda calls *Wenxin Diaolong* "the highest peak of early Chinese literary criticism."

In 1938, Chinese scholar Chang Guang, in his article "*Wenxin Diaolong* and Its Author," also regarded *Wenxin Diaolong* mainly as a work of "literary criti-

cism,” saying that the work is something “between literary history, literary introduction, and literary criticism, but with more elements of literary criticism, so that people in discussing *Wenxin Diaolong*, always hailed it as the first Chinese monograph on literary criticism” (Chang, 1938). It can be found that Chang’s concept of “literary criticism” has excluded the “literary history” and “literary introduction” contained in Toda’s “literary criticism,” which is much narrower in meaning and cannot summarize the actual contribution of *Wenxin Diaolong*.

Toda also borrows Liu’s ranking of “literary criticism” at the time to support his assertion that *Wenxin Diaolong* was “the peak of early Chinese literary criticism.” In the “Xuzhi” section, Liu says, “When one reads the recent writings on literary criticism, there are quite a few of them: Cao Pi’s ‘On Prose,’ Cao Zhi’s ‘Letter to Yang Dezu,’ Ying Yang’s ‘On Form and Content of Prose,’ Lu Ji’s ‘A Verse on Prose,’ Zhi Yu’s ‘On Literary Schools,’ Li Chong’s ‘On Literary Works,’ etc. Most of them only touch on certain aspects of essays but rarely focus on the big picture. Some praise or accuse contemporary writers, some comment on the works of their predecessors, some point out, in general, the elegance and vulgarity of the meaning of the essays, and some give a brief account of the content of certain works. Cao Pi’s ‘On Prose’ is more detailed but incomplete; Cao Zhi’s ‘Letter to Yang Dezu’ is quite eloquent but not always appropriate; Ying Yang’s ‘On Form and Content of Prose’ is magnificent but rather sparse and brief; Lu Ji’s ‘A Verse on Prose’ is clever but too trivial and messy; ‘On Literary Schools’ is superb but unfortunately not very useful; ‘On Literary Works’ is shallow and incomplete. In addition, people like Huan Tan, Liu Zhen, Ying Zhen, Lu Yun, etc., also discussed prose writing in general, and sometimes perhaps had better opinions, but they failed to inherit well the teachings of the Sages of the past, and could not give much help to the future generations either.” (Lu and Mu, 1982, 416) Here we can see that Toda’s claim that *Wenxin Diaolong* is the “highest peak” is based on the standard released by Liu’s criticism of literary writings at his time as such: to seek the root from leaves, to search the spring from waves, to find the principles from the ancestors’ writings, and to enlighten future generations. This standard is exactly what Toda found in Liu’s pursuit of the systemic nature of literary theory. The Japanese scholar and writer Takahashi Kazumi has also described *Wenxin Diaolong* as “the most systematic theoretical work on literature in China” (Kazumi, 1980, 357). Liu Xie has achieved this, so in Toda’s opinion, *Wenxin Diaolong* deserves the reputation as the peak of “literary criticism” or “literary commentary.” The kind of text that is spontaneous, generalized, sparse, fragmented, and without a thoroughfare cannot be called “criticism” or “commentary.” Lu Xun’s classic commentary on *Wenxin Diaolong*, which “analyzes the quality of the literary spirit, encompasses the large and the trivial, and opens up the source of the literary fashion,” also contains an identification of its systemic nature. This point has become a consensus among contemporary Chinese scholars.

To sum up, modern Japanese scholars’ commentaries and studies on *Wenxin Diaolong* in their works on the history of Chinese literature have gone through three stages of development: Meiji, Taisyō, and Syōwa, with the emergence of great scholars represented by Suzuki Torao, Aoki Masaru, and Toda Hiroshiakutuki. In terms of content, the focus of their research has evolved from the brief introduction to *Wenxin Diaolong* at the beginning to the study of the struc-

ture of its chapters and the core issues, such as the doctrine of literature carrying on the Way. Among these reviews and studies, the stylistic characterization and historical positioning of *Wenxin Diaolong* are of particular value to Chinese academia: *Wenxin Diaolong* is firstly regarded as “Six Dynasties prose,” “critical literature” and then as “a mast piece of rhetorical literary trend of thought,” and finally as “the peak of early Chinese literary criticism.” The emergence of such scholars as Suzuki Torao and Toda Hiroshiakatuki gradually made the study of *Wenxin Diaolong* in Japan a prominent field. As an important object of Japanese Chinese studies, the study of work in Japan has entered a new stage of development.

Looking back at the history of the dissemination of *Wenxin Diaolong* in modern Japan, if considering the various political, economic, and military conflicts and confrontations between China and Japan during this period, especially the history of China’s disadvantageous position, oppressed-ness, and bullied-ness during these conflicts and confrontations, we are incredibly amazed at the charm and power of Chinese culture itself. It is foreseeable that in the new era of China’s increasing rise as a global power and the 21st century, when Sino-Japanese relations are becoming increasingly optimistic, traditional Chinese culture will contribute even more and newer shared values.

#### References

- Chang, Guang. 1938. “*Wenxin Diaolong* and Its Author,” in *The Mean Post*, June 14-15, 1938.
- Hirofumi, Kadowaki. 2005. *A Study of Weixin Diaolong*, Tokyo: Creative Literature Press.
- Hiroshi, Kouzen. 1984. “A General Review of *Wenxin Diaolong*,” in his *Kouzen Hiroshi’s Essays on Wenxin Diaolong*, ed. & trans. by Enhua Cheng, Jinan: Qilu Press.
- Hiroshiakatuki, Toda. 1987. *Researches into Chinese Literature*, Tokyo: Kyuko Press.
- Kazumi, Takahashi. 1980. *The Complete Works of Takahashi Kazumi*, vol. 20, Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha.
- Kennkitirou, Kojima. 1912. *An Outline of Chinese Literature*, Tokyo: Fukuyama House.
- Kojima Kennkitirou, 1909. *A History of Chinese Literature: Ancient Part*, Tokyo: Fukuyama House.
- Li, Yong. 2019. “‘Rhetoricism’ and Aoki Masaru’s View of Chinese Literature,” in *Journal of Baoding University*.
- Lu, Kanru and Shijin Mu. 1982. *Wenxin Diaolong: Translation & Annotation*, Jinan: Qilu Press.
- Masaru, Aoki. 1943. *A History of Chinese Literary Thoughts*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Publishers.
- Qi, Liangde. 2007. *A Study of the Literary Aesthetics in Wenxin Diaolong*, Ph.D. Thesis, Shandong University.
- Sadakichi, Kojyou. 1897. *A History of Chinese Literature*, Tokyo: Journal of Economy Press.
- Torao, Suzuki. 1925. *A History of Chinese Poetics*, Tokyo: Hirofumidousyobo.
- Yang, Honglie. 1922. “A Study of *Wenxin Diaolong*,” in: *Supplement of Morning Post*, Oct. 24, 1922.
- Zhang, Zhiping. 2016. “Literary Criticism as Art: The Chinese ‘Critical Literature’ since May Fourth Movement,” in *Literary Review*.