

Pan Maoming's Philosophy and Cosmology: a Historiographical Research on the Sources and Cultural Background

Sergii Rudenko

Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Professor, Guangdong University
of Petrochemical Technology (Maoming, China),
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Kyiv, Ukraine)
E-mail: rudenkosrg@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9069-0989>

Feng-Shuo Chang

Ph.D., Associate Professor, Guangdong University of Petrochemical Technology
(Maoming, China)
E-mail: feng.shuo.chang@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4315-0194>

Changming Zhang

Ph.D., Associate Professor, Guangdong University of Petrochemical Technology
(Maoming, China)
E-mail: zhangchangming@gdpu.edu.cn
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6218-8526>

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This paper presents the results of the authors' study of the philosophical heritage of the Ancient Chinese philosopher Pan Maoming, who played an essential role in the development of spiritual culture, as well as Philosophy and Science of Ancient Southern China (nowadays, Guangdong Province). The authors carried out historiographical research of currently available ancient and modern sources, which contain data on the life and philosophical ideas of Pan Maoming; reconstructed the Pan Maoming's intellectual biography; revealed the main features of his worldview. The authors reconstructed the

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social, cultural, and philosophical context of the historical epoch in which Pan Maoming's philosophical and scientific views arose and developed; clarified the philosopher's historical role in the development of local culture in the Southern region of Ancient China.

The article contains the author's description and interpretation of the main philosophical ideas of Pan Maoming, the main amid which the authors consider the ethical concept of "peace and emptiness," the concept of "clumsiness"; the idea of "monasticism for the happiness of the people." The authors compared Pan Maoming's philosophical ideas with Lao-tzu's philosophical doctrine and came to the conclusion that Pan Maoming formed his own unique and original elaboration of Taoist philosophy, significantly developed its linguistic (conceptual) apparatus and worldview.

The authors paid particular attention to the description and analysis of Pan Maoming's cosmological views, which include the doctrine of "Inner alchemy" (Neidan), the doctrine of "chaos, order and causality." The authors concluded that Pan Maoming's cosmological ideas significantly developed a way of understanding the Universe, the relationship between "inert" and "living" matter, the "world of nature" and the "world of human" in the Taoist philosophical culture.

The authors also presented and substantiated their point of view that some philosophical and cosmological ideas of Pan Maoming have not only of historical value but can also be used for developing and enriching the local spiritual culture of Guangdong Province (an intrinsic part of which is the so-called "Pan Maoming's culture") in the form of ethical and educational practices, as well as practices of strengthening cultural unity and identity.

Keywords: Pan Maoming, philosophy, cosmology, Ancient China, "Inner Alchemy" (Neidan), "Pan Maoming's culture"

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Introduction

The person of Pan Maoming is not part of the traditional canon of key intellectuals, through which Western historiography of philosophy and culture presents and interprets the philosophy, science, and culture of Ancient China to English-speaking readers. The name of Pan Maoming is not mentioned as in solid, time-tested multi-volume editions, for example, *The Cambridge History of China* (Twitchett & Loewe 1986; Dien & Knapp 2019), as well as in small articles or essays from Chinese studios written in English (Li Rui, 2019). On the one hand, this state seems quite justified, because, no doubts, the figure and theoretical legacy of Pan Maoming is minor compared to such well-known philosophers, scholars, religious, political and cultural actors as Lao-tzu, Confucius, Mo-Tzu, Sun-Tzu, Ming-Tzu, and many others. On the other hand, we believe that local studies in Chinese philosophy and culture should not be ignored for at least a few reasons.

First, most studies of major figures, philosophical schools and cultural currents of ancient China tend to generalise the results and systematically present them. In other words, studies of this type, at least methodologically (sometimes theoretically), are aimed at *generalisation* the results obtained. Of course, generalisation and systematisation cannot be interpreted as shortcomings of a study. However, when we resort to techniques that present the results of research holistically and systematically, we inevitably throw out of our attention small details and nuances. To paraphrase the famous words of Immanuel Kant, we can say that there is a "necessary dialectic" that inevitably leads any generalising study to a lack of detail and nuance. At the same time, a certain lack of systematicity, logic, coherence and scale is an inevitable characteristic of research that methodologically aimed at studying individual figures, facts, works, ideas of a particular culture and its history.

Secondly, the study of the philosophical and cultural heritage of local Chinese thinkers and actors allows us to supplement and expand generalising research significantly. Moreover, this type of local studies can play an essential role in constructive criticism, which points to the limitations and, at the same time, the advantages of generalising research. We have revealed a more detailed argumentation on this issue in previous publications (Rudenko, 2014: 24-28).

Thirdly, local studies of Chinese philosophy and culture avoid another dangerous theoretical and methodological bias, which in modern literature is denoted by the terms *Eurocentrism* and *Westernism*. Scientists in the 1950s, such as Ukrainian Soviet scholars Volodymyr Dmytrychenko and Volodymyr Shynkaruk (Dmytrychenko & Shynkaruk, 1958), emphasised the theoretical and methodological inability and unfoundedness of Western-centric guidelines in studying the history of Chinese philosophy and culture in the 1950s.

The history of the spiritual culture of the Chinese people, in particular, the history of Chinese philosophy, is clear, indisputable evidence of the absolute groundlessness of the ideas of "Eurocentrism" or "West-centrism" in the development of science and philosophy. Reactionary bourgeois historians have made considerable efforts to prove that all the development of science and philosophy was concentrated in the West only, that the peoples of the East did not create any original philosophical teachings, that the philosophical thought of the East trailed behind Western philosophy, or regurgitated old religions... The peoples of the East, including the Chinese people, have made a massive contribution to the development of the material and spiritual culture of humankind... modern science and philosophy are the product of the creativity of particular people and not "chosen peoples," but all the peoples of the West and East."

A similar point of view (though not in such a blatant polemical form) is held by the authors of modern research on the comparative analysis of the ideas of Western European and Chinese philosophy. For example, the modern researcher of cross-cultural communication K. Hwang in his article "Escape from Kantian Eurocentric bias in cross-cultural psychology" (Hwang, 2020: 2-5) on the example of comparing views on the nature of the moral act by Immanuel Kant and Confucius, finds and substantiates the "Eurocentric bias" in Immanuel Kant's position on the nature of moral duties. Using this example, K. Hwang demonstrates the existence of many Eurocentric biases in modern research in the social sciences, in particular, the relationship between the study of the relationship between individual and collective in cross-cultural psychology.

These considerations have determined the features of the goals and main objectives of our study of the figure of Pan Maoming, his philosophical, scientific and cultural heritage.

First of all, the authors of this article deliberately sought to construct the study in such a way as to avoid generalising, classifying, and systematising judgments about Pan Maoming's philosophical and cosmological views. Undoubtedly, some aspects of generalisation and systematicity are present in this study. However, the authors sought to avoid setting such goals as "defining the place and significance of Pan Maoming's ideas in Taoism," "analysing Pan Maoming's contribution to China's general philosophy and culture," on the scale of "Western European cosmology," "definition of originality and novelty." Instead, the authors aimed to conduct a rigorous empirical study of sources that contain data on the life and scientific heritage of Pan Maoming; to analyse in detail his worldview, the content of the main philosophical and cosmological ideas without trying to fit them into the "general context" and "general logic"

of the development of ancient Chinese philosophy. In setting such tasks, we do not deny the value of generalising research and consider them possible, but only after careful study of sources and historiography through local studies. The authors of this article do not in any way believe that Pan Maoming's philosophical, scientific and cultural views developed in isolation from the general culture of China; however, we seek to avoid unreasonable exaggerations about the existence of "global processes" in ancient Chinese philosophy (by analogy with the current time) and intrinsic Pan Maoming's inclusion to them.

An essential task of this study is also to analyse the influence and significance of Pan Maoming's philosophical, scientific and cultural heritage on the local, regional culture formation (currently, the culture of Guangdong Province) both during the life of the philosopher and at the current time. The authors aimed to identify and describe those components of Pan Maoming's philosophical, cosmological and cultural views that, despite their historical distance, continue to be valuable and can be practically applied to the development of the modern local culture of Guangdong Province.

The third objective of this study was to develop and improve the methodology of local studies of Chinese philosophy, science and culture, which could be applied to further studies of the history of spiritual culture in Guangdong Province and would be a useful tool to prevent Eurocentrism and West-centrism in understanding Chinese philosophy and culture.

Methodology

To study Pan Maoming's worldview, cultural heritage, philosophical and cosmological views, the authors used modern methods and approaches to the history of philosophy, social and cultural anthropology, as well as the history of science. The methodology of this study was developed and formed by the authors based on modern works on the history of local philosophy and culture, as well as their developments in the methodology of research of local philosophy and culture, presented in previous publications by one of the authors (Rudenko, 2012, 2018).

One of the critical tasks of this study is the historiographical description of sources that contain data on the Pan Maoming's biography, main stages of creativity, philosophical and cosmological views, as well as a description and reconstruction of the social and cultural context in which they arose and developed. The peculiarity of the historiographical study of the Pan Maoming's cultural heritage is that he did not present his philosophical and cosmological views in a systematic form. That is why the authors of this article have chosen several descriptive methods and approaches that have been developed in the concept of interpretive anthropology by the American researcher of local cultures, Clifford Geertz. The authors modified according to the characteristics of the material of this study and applied the approach "*Thick Description*," the main points of which is presented in detail in the work of Clifford Geertz the *Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz 1973: 3-32). The authors of this article used and interpreted the Clifford Geertz's idea of "Thick Description" in the following way. The description of any cultural message (action, event, state) (in this case — the texts were written by Pan Maoming) should not be purely external, phenomenal, but should take into account (1) the intention, (2) the addressee, (3) the specific historical meaning and (4) social code, which is specific to a certain point in time, a particular local culture and social group (Geertz, 1973: 6)

The authors also used the Clifford Geertz's ideas presented in his work *Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretative anthropology* (Geertz, 1983). We used and applied in this study the following idea of Clifford Geertz about the "inevitability" of local knowledge:

“As frameworks are the very stuff of cultural anthropology, which is mostly engaged in trying to determine what these people or that take to be the point of what they are doing, all this is very congenial to it. Even in its most universalist moods — evolutionary, diffusionist, functionalist, most recently structuralist or sociobiological — it has always had a keen sense of the dependence of what is seen upon where it is seen from and what it is seen with. To an ethnographer, sorting through the machinery of distant ideas, the forms of knowledge are always ineluctably local, indivisible from their instruments and their encasements. One may veil this fact with ecumenical rhetoric or blur it with strenuous theory, but one cannot really make it go away” (Geertz, 1983: 4).

In our opinion, Clifford Geertz's doubts about the possibility of a “general theory” of a particular culture are an essential tool in eliminating the Eurocentrism and Westcentrism we have mentioned in interpreting Pan Maoming's philosophical and cosmological views, as well as the background culture of South China.

In addition to the methods of social and cultural anthropology, the authors used several methods and methodological approaches that function in the history of local (national) philosophy. Among them, (1) the idea of reconstructive reflection (developed by one of the authors of this article), the essence of which lies in the fundamental impossibility of a complete rational reconstruction of the history of philosophy (Rudenko, 2012: 119-177); (2) the “reception studies in the history of philosophy” approach, developed by the contemporary Polish philosopher of philosophy Tomasz Mróz (Mróz, 2016: 46-61).

The authors of this article also used the idea of Tomasz Mróz on the feasibility and prospects of studying local philosophy and culture, which is presented in the form of three recommendations:

“1. consider minor authors, though; naturally, those in the top international philosophical league seem to be the most attractive; 2. search for material outside the works traditionally considered to be philosophical; study literature and poetry, for example; 3. consider the following: is it more fruitful to write another study on Hegel or Kant, or to do pioneering work on a little known author?” (Mróz, 2016: 37).

To describe and analyse the Pan Maoming's cosmological ideas, the authors of this paper used and applied as a methodological approach the ideas and experience of such scientists in the field of philosophy and cosmology as Oleg Bazaluk (Bazaluk 2019), Denys Svyrydenko (Svyrydenko & Fatkhutdinov, 2020), etc.

The sources

Pan Maoming's 潘茂名 historical records were first seen in the Beihulu 北户录 by Duan Gonglu 段公路 in the Tang Dynasty (Qian & Liu, 2019). The book was completed in 871 and recorded the animals, plants, and local customs in the Lingnan region (now Guangdong area). The authors travelled through the area of Maoming in present-day Gaozhou and discovered that the local market was named “Xianxu 仙虚” (the immortal market) because it was next to the remains of Pan Maoming's alchemy furnace (Li, 2003). Also, the fragment of Ling Biao Lu Yi 岭表录异 written by Liu Xun 刘恂 of the Tang Dynasty was retained in Taiping Huan Yu Ji 太平寰宇记. Ling Biao Lu Yi is a book that records the social life and customs of the Lingnan area, which mentions that Pan Zhou (approximately in Maoming City and Dianbai County, Gaozhou City, Wuchuan City, and other places in Guangdong Province today) was named after Pan Maoming. After the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the

stories of “Pan Maoming” are often found in local chronicles, such as *Guangdong tongzhi* 广东通志 (Guangdong General History) and *Gaozhou Fuzhi* 高州府志, but their content mostly contains the information on the social life and customs of the area (Liang, 2006b).

Pan Maoming himself has no published works. The most relevant information about him comes from the *Pan Xian Quan Shu* 潘仙全书 (Complete Writings of Immortal Pan) edited by Tan Yingxiang 谭应祥 in the late Qing Dynasty, which systematically introduces Pan Maoming’s life and philosophy (Liang, 2006b). The book was discovered by Zhang Junshao 张均绍 and was the only remaining copy in the world at that time. Zhang studied the book in-depth and referred to other related documents on Pan Maoming before publishing *Pan Maoming, the Pioneer of Lingnan Taoism* 岭南道教先驱潘茂名 in 2006 (Liang, 2006b). It is the most systematic documentation of Pan Maoming’s deeds and philosophy. It also provides an appendix to Lao-tzu’s *Tao Te Jing* and two books included in the *Daozang* 道藏 The Daoist Canon: *Tai Shang Lao Jun Shuo Chang Qing Jing Miao Jing* 太上老君说常清静妙经 and *Gaoshang Yuhuang Xinyin Miao Jing* 高上玉皇心印妙经. In addition to the books mentioned above, Pan Maoming’s deeds, and descriptions of them, are also found in literary works. The most famous is Kong Yong’s poem “Stone-boat and Alchemical furnace.” Kong Yong 孔镛 was the prefect of Gaozhou at that time. He wrote this poem besides the Pan Maoming site, and after that, local officials, literati, and gentry produced similar creations (Li, 2003).

We have not obtained *Pan Xian Quan Shu* or *Lingnan Taoist Pioneer Pan Maoming*. The primary references for this research come from *Modern Maoming Daily*, *Southern Journal*, and *Origin and Theory of Chinese Historical Geography*, all of which use secondary data analysis. Among them, Zhang Junshao’s article “On the theoretical core of Pan Maoming’s Taoist thought (2011)” is used as the primary basis for the analysis of Pan Maoming’s thoughts.

Li Juexun 李爵勋, Liang Jiye 梁基毅, and others have studied relevant legends, the origin of place names, and Taoism. Li Juexun’s article cites many local chronicles and literary works and compares them with existing ruins, showing that Pan Maoming was a real person in history (Li, 2003). Liang Jiye has a special article on the authenticity of Pan Mao’s famous characters and the relevance of place naming and people (Liang, 2006b). In contrast to Li Juexun, Liang’s articles consider Pan Maoming to be a “doctor/healer” and explain that his medical knowledge and technology belong to Chinese alchemy. Liang believes that Pan Maoming’s words and deeds practice the ideas of Lao-tzu’s *Tao Te Ching* (Liang, 2006a, 2010).

In 2019, Qian Yuanchu 钱源初 and Liu Zhenggang 刘正刚 studied the origin of Maoming’s place names and concluded that they should originate from the name of the river “Maoming Water,” not from Pan Maoming. The so-called Pan Xian (Immortal Pan) was originally named Pan Mao, not Pan Maoming. Qian and Liu believe that the current misunderstanding may have originated from the Song Dynasty, that intellectuals during the Song Dynasty tend to associate local legends with celebrity names as the name of cities. The explanation that Maoming is named after local celebrities has been passed down to this day. In the same year, Liao Jun 廖君, an expert on Lingnan culture, was the editor-in-chief of the documentary *Pan Maoming*. From 2016 to 2019, Liao Jun collected and investigated documents related to Pan Maoming. After discussing it with a number of scholars and experts, they concluded that Maoming city was named after Pan Maoming (Jun, 2020). The local government-connected Pan Maoming’s good deeds with the early promotion of Lady Xian’s “Haixin Gaoliang (now Gaozhou, Guangdong Province) 好心

高凉 (Good heart/will Gaoliang)” culture, and believed that Maoming’s “Haixin Maoming 好心茂名 (Good heart/will Maoming)” and Haixin Gaoliang culture originated from the story of Pan Maoming’s practice of medicine. They believe that Pan Maoming’s medical knowledge and techniques have been passed on by later generations and have contributed to the development of Chinese medicine.

Pan Maoming’s intellectual biography

Pan Maoming (290-371), a Taoist and medical scientist in the Jin Dynasty, was born in Panpo, Genzi Town, Gaozhou (now in Maoming City, Guangdong Province) in the first year of Taixi in the Jin Dynasty (290). According to historical records, the young Pan Maoming once travelled to the northeast during the Yongjia period of the Western Jin Dynasty. One day, Pan met two Taoist priests playing chess in Xindu 新都 (now Chun’an County, Zhejiang Province) and watched them for a long time (Li, 2003; Liang, 2006a). One of the Taoists asked him if he could understand chess, and the Taoists appreciated his clever answers. The Taoists taught him the “Huang Jing 黄精 (Polygonatum sibiricum)” prescription for longevity, after which he began to learn the techniques of alchemy and health preservation (internal and external alchemy) (Li, 2003).

During his second grand tour, Pan came to Jiankang 建康 (now in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province). Pan admired Zhang Xuanbin 张玄宾, a famous Maoshan Taoist, and learned Taoist nihilism and metaphysics from him (People’s government of Gaozhou, 2020). After bidding farewell to Zhang Xuanbin, Pan returned to his hometown of Gaozhou to live in seclusion. At that time, Gaozhou was hit by floods and plague, and Pan Maoming practiced medicine and made pills to save the people. The imperial court repeatedly recruited Pan Maoming to be an official, but he refused. Pan Maoming expressed his willingness to do his utmost, as a civilian, to treat the suffering of the people throughout his life. Pan ultimately died during a plague because he was actively trying to help the sick and doing his best to save them. Later generations were grateful for his good deeds, and they deified his story, saying that he finally became immortal (Liang, 2006b). Currently, it is generally believed that the Sui Dynasty is named Pan Maoming’s hometown, “Maoming County.” Later, in the Tang Dynasty, “Panzhou 潘州” was established, which was then named for his merits. However, some scholars found evidence that the city was named after the river “Maoming River” rather than being named after a person (Qian & Liu, 2019).

According to historical data, Pan Maoming was already a local hermit when he was young, and he could read the Book of Changes and the Book of Songs, both of which are related to Confucianism and Taoism (Madame Xian Culture Research Network, 2018). When young Pan Maoming was travelling, he encountered Taoist priests who taught Huang Jing, the immortal prescription (Li Jue Xun, 2003). Huang Jing (Polygonatum sibiricum) is an essential plant in the art of bigu 辟谷 (lit. “to avoid grains”) (Arthur, 2009). It is also evidence that he began to learn alchemy and acquire medical skills. He then went to Nanjing to continue to study metaphysics and medicine, especially the Taoist belief in “nothingness” as the origin of the Universe. In his later years, he continued to develop his knowledge of Lao Tzu and Taoist philosophy and to practice them personally. He refused to be an official, and instead, he lived like a hermit. Scholars generally believe that Pan practised the Lao-tzu’s principles of “purification” and “inaction” throughout his life. These descriptions of self-cultivation and immortality are also common in literary works related to Pan (Liang, 2006a).

Scholars often suggest that Pan Maoming was a Taoist figure who valued practice. Such practice is mainly manifested in continuous self-cultivation, free treatment of the poor,

seclusion, and few desires (Liang, 2010; Zhang, 2011). Liang (2006a, 2010) regards him as a “doctor/healer” and believes that Pan’s Taoist thought can be traced to the two Taoist books *Tai Shang Lao Jun Shuo Chang Qing Jing Miao Jing* and *Gaoshang Yuhuang Xinyin Miao Jing* and that his health regimen originated from the theory of internal and external alchemy. Pan freely healed the poor and lived in seclusion in the practice of Lao Tzu’s principles of “Bu-zheng 不争 (do not fight; not striving for),” “Qing-jing 清静 (purity and stillness),” and “Wu-Wei 无为 (do nothing/inaction).” Pan Maoming did not have any works. Only the *Pan Xian Lingqian Yibai Shu* 潘仙灵签一百数 (Immortal Pan’s One Hundred Divination Poems), compiled by his disciples, was believed that represents his thoughts. Zhang Junshao is an authority on contemporary research on Pan Maoming.

In order to analyse Pan Maoming’s poems, Zhang Junshao categorised them, according to content, into four types: 1. “Persuade others to practice Daoism,” 2. “Persuade others to practice morality,” 3. “Inaction,” and 4. “Purity and stillness.” He then selected 38 poems that were representative of the four categories (Zhang, 2011). In the poems, Taoism mainly emphasises “returning to the simple and true,” morality is mainly expressed as the principle to “practice to help others,” “doing nothing” means not to force anything or fight, but to conform to nature whereas “Purity and stillness” mean to be pure in heart. Most of the poems do not, however, express only a single category. For example, there is a poem that Zhang Junshao categorised in both the “Inaction” and the “Purity and stillness” categories. It reads: 入深山中, 自行搭建茅屋, 不理俗事, 专心练丹药. Go into the deep mountains, build your own huts, ignore mundane matters, and concentrate on practicing medicine.” This sentence is also the most frequently cited by the mass media as evidence that Pan Maoming was “indifferent to fame and wealth” and “unwilling to be an official.” (According to the result of a google search on the poem in 2020.8.24) According to our classification, this sentence also includes the need to “persuade others to cultivate,” “Wu-Wei,” and “alchemy.”

We used the superficial meaning of words or sentences to classify the 38 divination poems selected by Zhang Junshao. After removing incomplete and vague sentences, we identified five main words and phrases: “inaction,” “morality,” “persuade others to cultivate the way,” “natural,” and “alchemy.” Among the 38 poems, six poems contained more than two critical elements in our analysis. The key elements that appeared the most were “persuade others to practice Taoism,” followed by “inaction” and “morality.” Comparing our analysis with Zhang Junshao’s classification, we found that “wuwei” has the highest consistency with our classification, followed by the classification of “cultivation,” whereas the “Purity and stillness” in Zhang Junshao’s classification mostly has the word “alchemy” (seems the alchemy practice need to be away from people).

One of Pan Maoming’s 100 poems expresses the following: “济世有奇诀, 救人需用心. 三天曾记录, 四海尽知名. There is a special way to help others, that is, you need to use your heart. It will be recorded over time and will be widely known in the future.” This poem was used by the local authorities to represent the cultural movement of “Good Heart/Will Maoming.” Both Zhang Junshao’s classification and our classification place this poem in the category of “self-cultivating (morality).” On the whole, scholars generally agree that Pan Maoming’s behaviour reflects his principles, that is, it demonstrates his commitment to “doing nothing” and “not fighting” as well as his belief in the need to “help others” when it is morally called for. “Doing nothing” and “not fighting” are the main ideas of Lao-tzu. The “helping others” aspect is more like the values of Confucianism in the philosophy of Rushi 入世 (lit. Into world; an opposite word for hermit).

In addition, it is essential to note that Pan Maoming's 100 divination poems have similarities with other common temple divination poems, especially in that the "ambiguity" element contributes to the "plausible" interpretation of divination. During our research, we found that the 38 fortune-telling poems selected by Zhang Junshao are similar to 16 of the 384 fortune-telling poems of the Zhuge Miben Shenshu 诸葛密本神数 (the Secret Book of Zhuge's Divine Numbers) and that 42.1% of Pan's 38 poems are duplicated in other divination poems (Baptandier, 2016). The sentences were more than 90% similar, and the overall meaning of the verses was basically the same. The book Zhuge Miben Shenshu combines the hexagrams of the Yijing and the corresponding 384 poems as the result of divination. The fortuneteller calculates the strokes of Chinese characters or grabs the rice three times to get three numbers, then uses a specific calculation method to calculate a number between 1 and 384 and find the corresponding poem. Du Jiangshui 杜江水 (2000) found that Zhuge Miben Shenshu should have been written by literati after the Northern Song Dynasty based on textual research. He argued that Zhuge Miben Shenshu was a folk work for divination and that 80% of the 384 poems in the book were ambiguous so that it could be used to explain any topic ingeniously. Due to limited data and time, this study only analysed Zhang Junshao's 38 poems. If Pan's original divination poems can be obtained in the future, we should be able to analyse further and compare them for a more precise understanding.

Pan Maoming's philosophical views

Pan Maoming's philosophical views were formed mainly under the influence of the philosophical culture of Taoism. The philosophy of Lao-tzu, presented in the book *Tao-te-Ching*, can be considered the core of Pan Maoming's worldview. However, at a certain stage of life and work, Confucianism and Buddhism also influenced the worldview and philosophical views of Pan Maoming. Undoubtedly, this influence was secondary and did not change the general domain of the development of Pan Maoming's philosophical views.

As already mentioned, the primary sources for studying the of Pan Maoming's philosophical views are the texts of his contemporaries and followers. Although the philosopher himself did not systematically present his philosophical views, we tend to believe that they have an internal systematicity and consistency, and therefore can be described and presented systematically.

Generally, Pan Maoming's philosophical views are pronounced *practical* nature. According to researchers of the life and cultural heritage of Pan Maoming, the philosopher attached great importance to "practice throughout life."

In our opinion, the following Pan Maoming's statement also testifies to this quite clearly:

"If you do not study and make progress throughout your life, your time in this world will have been spent in vain. Progression afterlife cannot be avoided; you might fall into a deep pitted moat forever" (He & McNulty, 2011: 2).

On the one hand, Pan Maoming meant monastic practice, and on the other hand, he emphasised the importance of social and ethical practice. That is why the main Pan Maoming's philosophical ideas have, above all, *ethical* and *social* character and, in our opinion, are represented in three main domains: the doctrine of "peace and emptiness," the idea of "clumsiness" and the idea of "monasticism for the happiness of the people." It is important to note that we use the term "ethics" in the sense that was inherent in the era of Pan

Maoming's life. However, we believe that the differences between the use of this term in the European philosophical tradition are insignificant.

The calmness and emptiness. Pan-Maoming's teaching on peace and emptiness refers to the general concept of "inaction" (Wu-Wei), which was developed in Taoism. Pan Maoming's interpretation of Wu-Wei, on the one hand, coincides with Lao-tzu's position, and on the other hand, is its extension and concretisation in ethical, practical and social relations. According to available sources, Pan Maoming interprets Wu-Wei as a person's essential attitude to society and life. According to Taoism, the world must exist in harmony with society and the people. People must follow the path of Heaven; that is, he must renounce his will and become free from opposition. Because the Tao is the source of things in the Universe, it does not act arbitrarily, so it is called "inaction." In this interpretation of the teachings of Lao-tzu, Pan Maoming emphasises that Wu-Wei does not mean the absence of activity, but the absence of arbitrariness. That is, the practical, ethical, and social dimension of Wu-Wei is to avoid arbitrariness and related errors, not to refrain from any action in the literal sense.

Pan Maoming reveals the meaning of Wu-Wei in the form of practical maxims that have ethical and social meaning:

"Catch beasts in the water while looking for fish within the mountains. From morning till the evening, you are wasting your strength and getting negative results. Change the way and road, and you can get accomplishments" (He & McNulty, 2011: 2).

This allegorical statement, in our opinion, could be interpreted as follows. "If you're on the wrong path or using the wrong method, then it's hard to succeed. It is time to reassess your methods and possibly change your course of action; it may be required to achieve your goal."

Also, these features of Pan Maoming's understanding of Wu-Wei can be seen in another of his statements, which, in our opinion, has the character of an ethical and managerial maxim:

"Pay no attention to verbal attacks and slander; eventually, the truth will be on display. It is better to be satisfied with what you have and be law-abiding" (He & McNulty, 2011: 2).

In other words, this statement means "do not pay attention to nonsense or minor mischief because everything has its own destiny."

Based on the concept of Wu-Wei that Pan Maoming formulates his understanding of calmness and emptiness.

Following the opinion of Lao-tzu, Pan Maoming speaks of calmness as one of the chief virtues that allow a person to become like the nature of the Tao, and thus successfully govern the people and society. However, Pan Maoming emphasises the need not only for a proper understanding of what peace is but also for the practical implementation of this understanding. In other words, Pan Maoming emphasises the need not only for a "theoretical" understanding of the concept of "peace" on the model of Lao Tzu and Taoism in general but also for their *practical* understanding, which is expressed in the application of this idea in personal life and practice of governing society.

Here is an example of Pan Maoming's interpretation of "calmness":

"Do not blindly go-ahead to become a leader. You will realise that it is better to pull on the reins and stop the horse. There are thousands of roads, it's better to look for the right one" (He & McNulty, 2011: 2).

"Rushing about all of your life will be in vain, and you won't find any achievements. It's better to go back home and be happy" (He & McNulty, 2011: 2).

As we can see, all these definitions, on the one hand, do not contradict Lao-tzu's position, and on the other hand, they significantly expand and develop it in practical terms.

According to Pan Maoming, "calmness" creates a productive "emptiness," which, again, is interpreted by the philosopher in the form of an ethical maxim and the rules of governing the people:

"You are at a crossroads, whether you can be successful depends on whether you are stubborn or open to change. You may need to adjust your course of action" (He & McNulty, 2011: 2).

This statement suggests we believe that emptiness in the Pan Maoming's interpretation means the openness of man and society to change, while its stubborn absence leads to trouble.

The concept of clumsiness. The core of Pan Maoming's ethical views is the doctrine of *clumsiness*. According to Pan Maoming's position, the practical implementation of Wu-Wei, calmness and emptiness is clumsiness. Accordingly, the concept of clumsiness also has an ethical meaning. Clumsiness could be interpreted as a form by which calmness and emptiness are expressed in a specific (individual) personality. The authors believe that according to Pan Maoming's position, clumsiness can be defined as a way of manifesting the Tao in the life of a particular person. However, this detection is carried out not in a passive but also in an active form, therefore, in the form of a moral act.

Another feature of clumsiness is immediateness. In other words, clumsiness means, according to Pan Maoming, direct knowledge of the Tao, which is realised in the active unmediated practice of helping others. Pan Maoming describes clumsiness with the word "heart":

"There is a special way to help others, that is, you need to use your heart. It will be recorded over time and will be widely known in the future" (Zhang, 2011:101).

As we can see from the above quote, clumsiness, according to Pan Maoming, appears as a way of expressing not mind-mediated knowledge, but direct experience, which combines the general law of nature (Tao) and the personal will of a human.

Clumsiness, says Pan Maoming, is a manifestation of a person's personal life. In the practical aspect, clumsiness allows a person to implement the law of nature, even with limited "immediate," "external" resources.

Pan Maoming notes, *"There is one acre of the field; you can feel free to farm on it. If you do, there will be an endless harvest. This achievement will be accomplished in the West"* (He & McNulty, 2011: 2).

In other words, we tend to think that this statement means, *"You may not have vast resources, but if you manage what you have, you will surely succeed. It seems that you should not move in the near future or seek another occupation"* (He & McNulty, 2011: 2).

As an intermediate conclusion, it must be noted that the concept of clumsiness indicates some influence of the ideas of Confucianism and Buddhism on the worldview of Pan Maoming. However, this influence did not change the holistic worldview of the philosopher but emphasised the practical, ethical, and social orientation of his philosophical views.

Monasticism for people's happiness. As is well known, Pan Maoming was a practising monk. However, according to the analysis of various sources, Pan Maoming made significant changes in the understanding of the monastic practise, which could be described as “monasticism for the people’s happiness.” A notable difference between Pan Maoming’s monastic practice is that he to some extent rejects the idea of asceticism, which presupposes the monk’s departure from the secular world, contrasting it with the idea of “helping people” as the monk’s primary purpose. Undoubtedly, the idea of using the Tao way to govern the people and provide them with various benefits justly belongs to Lao-tzu. However, without denying Lao-tzu’s position, Pan Maoming gives it a pronounced practical and social character.

The idea of the monk’s openness to people and society can already be seen in how Pan Maoming characterises the practice of Taoism: “*When the world was at peace, the general put away his armour and weapons. Practising Taoism in the mountains is so beautiful, it makes people know who you really are.*” Even the practice of Taoism high in the mountains must be open and understandable to the people, just as the monk himself must be open and understandable.

Pan Maoming sees the true purpose of a monk in the usefulness of his knowledge for people and society, the criterion of which is nothing but how happy people and society are.

According to Pan Maoming, a monk should not hide and hide his knowledge from people. Applying his knowledge to people and society, even to solve practical and everyday problems, the monk realises his purpose and brings people closer to happiness.

This position, in our opinion, is presented in the following statement of Pan Maoming:

“Use your skills to help others, and you can get good results. If you are a doctor, you will be a famous doctor; if you are a teacher, you will be a famous teacher. Follow your heart and do what is right” (He & McNulty, 2011: 2).

The monk’s knowledge and skills become more developed through the practice of helping people, so this activity is related, able to combine the general and the individual.

From the above description and brief analysis of Pan Maoming’s philosophical views, it can be concluded that Pan Maoming, without entering into a discussion with the teachings of Lao-tzu, significantly develops them and forms his own unique view of Taoism. It is one of the fundamental features of Pan Maoming’s style of thinking, which distinguishes him from philosophers who develop their views by means *criticism* of their contemporaries and predecessors. Pan Maoming developed his own unique view of Lao-tzu’s philosophy and elaborated its main ideas without resorting to *criticism*. The experience of the development of Pan Maoming’s philosophical views once again confirms the limitations of the attitudes of Eurocentrism and West-centrism in the interpretation of the historical development of philosophy. After all, it is well known that the vast majority of the tradition of Western European philosophy is based on *criticism* (denial, refutation, falsification, verification) of a philosopher to his predecessors and contemporaries.

Pan Maoming’s cosmological views

Before proceeding the description and analysis of the Pan Maoming’s cosmological views, we consider it necessary to give an important, in our view, clarification of the peculiarities of the development of cosmological studies in the intellectual culture of China at the turn of the Ancient and Early Middle Ages. This salinity lies in the fact that cosmological studies have been inextricably linked with the development *Alchemy* and *Medicine*. Such a strong

interconnectedness of cosmology, astronomy, cosmogony, natural philosophy with alchemy, and medicine is not inherent in Western European intellectual culture, so we consider it necessary to focus on this feature of cosmological studies in China at the turn of the Ancient and Early Middle Ages.

The connection between Chinese cosmology, astronomy, cosmogony, alchemy and medicine has been described in many fundamental studies. From our standpoint, the most representative in this aspect are the works *The Theoretical Background of Laboratory Alchemy* by Nathan Sivin (Sivin, 1980), *science and civilisation in China* by Joseph Needham (Needham, 1983), *Great clarity: Daoism and alchemy in early medieval China* by Fabrizio Pregadio (Pregadio, 2006), *Two Ancient Chinese Antinomies: The Hengxian and Early Cosmology* by Li Rui (Li Rui, 2019), *History of Chinese Philosophy* by Bo Mou (Mou, 2009), *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy* edited by Antonio Cua (Cua, 2013) and others.

Based on the works mentioned earlier, we would like to briefly describe the points of contact between cosmology, astronomy, alchemy and medicine in the intellectual culture of China at the turn of the Ancient and Early Middle Ages.

First, ancient Chinese cosmology, astronomy, alchemy, and medicine are united by the philosophical and religious principles of Taoism.

Secondly, common to ancient Chinese cosmology, astronomy, alchemy and medicine is the problem *time*. According to Nathan Sivin (Sivin, 1980), the role of time is key to ancient Chinese cosmology, alchemy and medicine, as cosmological and astronomical ideas about time, stages of the Universe, its harmony are extrapolated to alchemy and medicine in the form of a practical solution. *Immortality (immortality)* in the form of creation *elixir*, which would reflect the harmony of the Universe. Solving the problem of immortality directly refers to the sphere *medicine* and her idea of *health*, the idea of which is the achievement of *immortality*.

Also, according to Nathan Sivin, *Alchemist* in the intellectual culture of ancient China is understood as an “accelerator of space processes” (Sivin, 1980). In other words, the art of alchemy and medicine is the practical ability to direct the development of the Universe in time.

As it is known, Pan Maoming is mentioned in various sources as a famous alchemist and physician. That is why his teaching on alchemy, which is interpreted as the art of creating pills and elixirs for *treatment* and improvement people’s *health*, is the basis for the description and analysis of his cosmological views. Pan Maoming’s cosmological views can be divided into the doctrine of *Inner Alchemy*; ideas about Chaos and Order; interpretation of causality.

Inner Alchemy (Neidan). Pan Maoming’s cosmological views based on the doctrine of inner alchemy and the interpretation of the relationship between inner and outer alchemy.

According to the scholar sources, Pan Maoming as an alchemist and physician practised external and internal alchemy. In the art of external alchemy, Pan Maoming was known as a master of tablet making. However, according to Pan Maoming, the practice of external alchemy is inextricably linked with internal alchemy. Internal alchemy, from Pan Maoming’s standpoint, is a practice that involves treating the human body as a “cauldron” that is a projection of space. Accordingly, the art of inner alchemy is the body’s use of its own essence and Qi energy as medicine. The essence of this practice is to bring the human body in the same order with which the Universe exists. The human body must become the point of intersection of divine energy. It is precisely the state Pan Maoming characterises as health and the path to immortality.

“With one exhalation, the heart and fire fall, one inhalation, the kidney water rises, one exhalation and one inhalation, the heart and kidney intersect, and the fire and water are all together, completing an energy cycle. The qi and blood in the meridians also prosper and decline at different times, and our work and rest should conform to the law of qi and blood. In this way, the inner alchemy can be achieved, and we can gain the way to Heaven” (Zhang, 2011: 101).

It should be noted that Pan Maoming does not interpret inner alchemy as a self-sufficient practice. It must be supplemented by external alchemy.

However, we can say that Pan Maoming prefers internal alchemy in terms of the need for more considerable efforts to master it than external alchemy. In our opinion, this thesis is confirmed by the following statement of Pan Maoming: “Dan Ding’s practice is extraordinary. The cultivation of inner alchemy requires powerful means (Zhang, 2011: 101).

At the same time, Pan Maoming emphasises that internal and external alchemy, as well as medicine, are not separate practices. They are all part of Taoist practice: “I don’t know what is thirsty for three days, and what is fullness for seven days. No matter how the four seasons change, I hope to achieve longevity through continuous practice of Taoism” (Zhang, 2011: 101).

In other words, according to Pan Maoming, internal alchemy and external alchemy (tablet alchemy) are closely related to the philosophical principles of calmness and emptiness. The art of medicine is to understand that “God can enter a stone, God can take shape, enter water and not drown, enter fire and not burn.” Alchemy and medicine guide a single being (such as the human body) in the pattern of the harmony of the Universe. Pan Maoming notes that alchemy and medicine are the art of combining spiritual essence and *Qi*, because “essence is heaven, *Qi* is earth, and god is their relationship and combination.” If the mind and spirit are unbalanced, the body will be dispersed and, as a result, will perish. Achieving longevity and health is the result of “acceleration” and control of cosmic processes within the body of a particular person. In this aspect, the condition of human salvation, his attainment of immortality is the activity of the “heart.”

As an intermediate conclusion, we note that Pan Maoming, in his concept of internal alchemy, presents his point of view, according to which “inert” matter and “living” matter, the “world of nature” and the “world of human” cannot be thought of as opposites, but as moments of the integral existence of the world. However, the unity of these regional ontologies is not achieved speculatively but through the practice of alchemy and medicine. In other words, alchemy and medicine are not only a separate craft with utilitarian goals but the practice and combination of the Universe and man, the practice of “accelerating” space and social change. However, this “acceleration” is possible only in a state of “calm” and “open heart.”

Pan Maoming interprets the categories of *Chaos*, *Order* and *Causality* in an ethical context. Chaos is interpreted as an undifferentiated form of simplicity, order as the achievement of “calmness,” and causality as a manifestation of the unity of the Universe, and therefore the basis and criterion of virtue.

Obviously, Pan Maoming’s cosmological views differ significantly from the methodological framework of the Western European tradition. However, even in the context of the development of the cosmology of ancient China, we believe that Pan Maoming’s cosmological ideas significantly developed a way of understanding the Universe, the relationship between “inert” and “living” matter, the “world of nature” and the “world of human” in the Taoist philosophical culture.

Discussion and conclusions

The results of the study of the historiography and cultural background of the Pan Maoming's Philosophy and Cosmological views provoke, in the authors' opinion, a fertile field for discussion.

The first debatable issue, in our opinion, is about a general methodological nature and concerns not only the philosophical and cultural heritage of Pan Maoming but rather the tools of studying the philosophy and culture of China at different stages of its historical development. It can be formulated as follows: "Is it possible to avoid Eurocentrism and West-centrism in the study of Chinese philosophy and culture?" In our opinion, one more thing is closely connected with this question: "Is it possible to compare the philosophical, religious, scientific culture of Western Europe and China and is it possible to have scientifically substantiated comparative studies in this field?"

On the one hand, the limitations, one-sidedness, and to some extent the "harmfulness" of the Westcentric (as well as the Eurocentric) guidelines are apparent, as pointed out by both current researchers of Chinese philosophy and culture and researchers of the 20th century. On the other hand, avoiding West-centrism, especially for researchers educated in the Western education system, is quite a challenge in that the results of studying Chinese philosophy and culture must still be presented in English in order to be accessible to a wide range of intellectuals, which immanently and inevitably (due to the history of its development) contains a Westcentric intention. Apparently, by resolving this conflict may be, paraphrasing the idea of Immanuel Kant, the presence of a constant *criticism* methodological tools and results obtained, which is possible only through the formation of international research groups that include scientists from the "western" and "eastern" cultural worlds.

Given the above, on the one hand, the status of comparative studies in European and Chinese philosophy is questionable. However, in our opinion, only an external, abstract comparison of European and Chinese philosophy and culture is unproductive. Promising prospects, from our point of view, have research in the format of reception studies, i.e. such explorations, the subject of which is the study of the way of perception of Chinese philosophy and culture in the European (Western) philosophical traditions and vice versa.

Another interesting debatable issue is the value of studying minor figures and, accordingly, local cultures of China. Undoubtedly, minor figures (such as Pan Maoming) will always "lose" to major figures (such as Lao-tzu and Confucius) in terms of impact, dissemination and originality. However, the authors of this article are convinced that the study of the intellectual and cultural heritage of local figures emphasises the richness of culture as a whole, its simultaneous unity and diversity. Also, local studies could significantly harmonise the processes of globalisation of culture (which have a positive impact on the development of the country and society) while preserving the identity and achievements of local communities.

Finally, the last controversial issue concerns the importance of the figure of Pan Maoming himself and the local culture of southern China (now Guangdong Province). This question might be formulated as follows: "Does the philosophical, scientific and cultural heritage of Pan Maoming have any value for the development of modern local culture of Guangdong Province, other than historical?" Despite the danger of being accused of unwarranted emotionality, the authors of this paper tend to answer in the affirmative. Undoubtedly, the achievements of Pan Maoming in philosophy, alchemy and medicine due to its historical distance can not be called modern. However, their philosophical, scientific and cultural heritage of Pan Maoming, in our opinion, is essential for the current stage of development of

Guangdong Province as a component of educational practices and local ethical practices. In this aspect, the philosophical and scientific achievements of Pan Maoming function in modern society. In this aspect, the “Pan Maoming’s Culture” is meaningfully and functionally an essential and valuable part of the culture of Guangdong Province.

As a result of the study, we came to the following conclusions. Pan Maoming is an essential figure for the development of the local culture of Southern China at the turn of the Ancient and Early Middle Ages. Pan Maoming developed his own unique view on the philosophy of Taoism and developed it significantly, focusing on personal, ethical and social practices, which aim at the happiness and well-being of the people. Pan Maoming’s cosmological views are presented in his practice of internal alchemy and medicine, which is also focused on personal and social practice, the benefits for individuals and society. In this regard, Pan Maoming’s cosmological ideas significantly developed a way of understanding the Universe, the relationship between “inert” and “living” matter, the “world of nature” and the “world of human” in the Taoist philosophical culture.

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