

Research Article

# Probing Metaphorical Thoughts in *Historical Records*

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## Abstract

In order to broaden the depth and width of the study of *Historical Records*, and then help its dissemination and inheritance. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, based on the consideration of metaphor as the contrast of words, the interaction of ideas and the means of cognition, adopted Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor mapping theory, this paper studies the metaphorical mechanism of *Historical Records* from three aspects at the macro level and from six aspects at the micro lever. Finally three conclusions were reached. First, although Sima Qian did not put forward any metaphorical theory, his narrative style in *Historical Records* contains rich metaphorical thoughts. Second, metaphor runs through the three major narrative types of romance, tragedy, and satire in *Historical Records*, respectively metaphorizing Sima Qian's idealism, compassion, and criticism. Third, *Historical Records* is not only good at using the basic metaphors proposed by contemporary scholars but also using extended metaphors such as syntagmatic metaphor, paradigmatic metaphor, and complex compound metaphor creatively and skillfully. It can be seen that Sima Qian is not only a master of history and literature, but also a great metaphorist of his generation.

## Keywords

*Historical Records* “史记”, Metaphor, Sima Qian “司马迁”

## 1. Introduction

*Historical Records* is not only a monumental work of history but also a literary gem. Although extensive research has been conducted on it over the years, few scholars have paid attention to its metaphorical thought. In fact, *Historical Records* is a work of high value on metaphors [16]. In 1980, Lakoff and Johnson published the magnum opus *Metaphors We Live By*, establishing the prominent position of metaphor. In this work, they proposed that the conceptual system is essentially metaphorical, and we live in metaphors all the time [8]. One of the leading figures of metaphor studies, Sun Yi, also pointed out that metaphor has objective reality and universality, and people deliberately or unconsciously use metaphors all the time [15]. Due to its universality, meta-

phors are always present in all literary works, political, scientific, technological, religious, and other discourses. As a special conceptual and cognitive tool of human beings, metaphor is a new way to observe the world, a new perspective to view things, and a bridge and medium for transitioning from the known to the unknown [15].

The reason why *Historical Records* ranks first among the *Twenty-Four Histories* depends not only on its detailed and reliable content but also on its excellent writing style, vivid character portrayals, and metaphorical narrative style. Historical narration is a complex language structure specifically constructed for the purpose of representing certain past events [1]. Narrative language is essentially metaphorical or

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figurative [1]. In other words, *Historical Records* exists as a metaphor, and the exploration of its metaphorical thought can not only deepen the research on Sima Qian and *Historical Records*, but also has immeasurable significance for its contemporary inheritance and dissemination.

## 2. Metaphor Theory

Metaphor has long been highly valued due to its unique charm. Scholars in different eras have defined metaphor differently due to the limitations of their times and different emphases.

### 2.1. Metaphor as Analogy of Words

Aristotle believed that metaphor is the application of a noun which properly applies to something else. The transfer may be from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species, or by analogy [2]. In fact, Aristotle's theory of metaphor is a rhetorical device, and at this stage, metaphor remains at the level of words, and its operating mechanism is analogy. Analogy originates from substitution, but it is not just substitution. Its focus lies in the similarity between the tenor and the vehicle. It can be inferred that similarity is the prerequisite of analogy and the basis of metaphor.

### 2.2. Metaphor as Interaction of Ideas

Richards pointed out that metaphor is the borrowing and interaction between different ideas and the interaction between contexts [11]. Some metaphors are constructed through the connection between the tenor and the vehicle, and this connection even includes their differences. This is the prototype of his Interaction Theory, and the core of the Interaction Theory is that the interaction between the tenor and the vehicle forms a new meaning different from its components, and metaphor is the result of this new meaning [11]. From Aristotle to Richards, metaphor has shifted from the analogy between Words to the interaction between Ideas. Obviously, the latter is the further development and inevitable result of the former.

Black believes that the working mechanism of metaphor is to create similarity between unrelated ideas [3]. This is the result of the further development of the Interaction Theory.

Aristotle pointed out that metaphor is a necessary condition for text composition. Richards believed that metaphor is the interaction of ideas and a means of constructing new meanings, and Black pointed out that it is metaphor that constructs similarity. From Aristotle, Richards to Black, their metaphorical thoughts are in the same line.

### 2.3. Metaphor as a Means of Cognition

One of the three major issues in cognitive science in the

20th century is the cognitive turn of metaphor [7], and Lakoff and Johnson are the representatives of this turn. They believe that the essence of metaphor is to understand and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another [8]. These two types of things belong to two different cognitive domains, and the mapping between the two cognitive domains constructs the conceptual metaphor. As shown in Figure 1, the conceptual mapping is a function from the source domain to the target domain, denoted as  $f: S \rightarrow T$ . Among this denotation  $S$  and  $T$  belong to two domains respectively, that is, non-empty set. According to a certain corresponding relationship  $f$ , any feature  $X$  in the domain  $S$  has a unique corresponding  $f(x)$  in the domain  $T$ , or it can be written as  $y=f(x)$ ,  $x \in S$ . Here,  $X$  is the value taken from the source domain and is the independent variable. and the  $Y$  value corresponding to the  $X$  value is the value in the target domain. The mapping between the two is completed under the bridging role of experience.

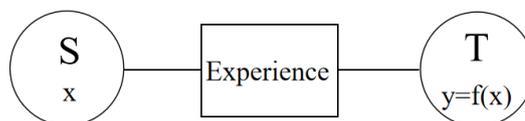


Figure 1. The Mapping principle of Conceptual Metaphor.

In short, metaphor associates all the elements in two non-empty sets through experience one by one, and then forms a mapping from the source domain to the target domain through language, thus giving birth to the conceptual metaphor. The human conceptual system is essentially metaphorical. That is, metaphor is ubiquitous and interacts and correlates at any time.

In view of this, this article takes Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor mapping theory as the framework to analyze the application of metaphor in Sima Qian's historical narration, so as to sort out the metaphorical thought and viewpoints contained in *Historical Records*.

## 3. Macroscopic Demonstration of the Metaphorical Thought in *Historical Records*

Metaphor is one of the most powerful language tools for human beings to understand the world [1]. Liu Ning proposed that the narrative of *Historical Records* has three plot types: romance, tragedy, and satire, which together form the aesthetic characteristics of *Historical Records*: metaphoricity, and this aesthetic characteristic constitutes a powerful narrative tension, metaphorically representing the ideals, sympathy, and criticism of the narrative respectively [10]. Therefore, this section will explore its metaphorical view from a macroscopic perspective through the three plot types of *His-*

torical Records.

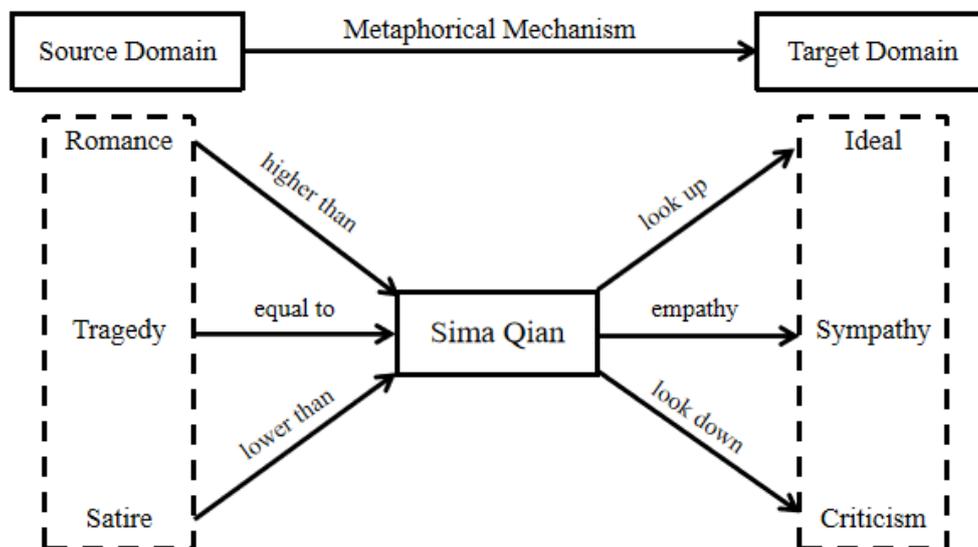


Figure 2. Macro Metaphor Mechanism of Historical Records.

### 3.1. Metaphor of Romantic Ideals

As shown in Figure 2, the romantic plot refers to the situation where the social status, moral level, etc. of the protagonist are higher than that of Sima Qian himself, so he looks up to, admires, and respects them, thus giving birth to romantic elements. Li Changzhi demonstrated from four aspects, namely, the Chu and Qi cultures, the economy, the *Biography of Dayuan in Historical Records*, and the relationship between Sima Qian and Confucius [9], that Sima Qian is romantic and *Historical Records* is romantic, and pointed out that Sima Qian is a representative of the naturalistic romantic school [9]. The most prominent feature of romanticism is the pursuit of an ideal world [10].

In the narrative of *Historical Records*, there are more than 100 heroic figures that Sima Qian looks up to and admires, such as Yao's *Selecting the Virtuous and Appointing the Capable* (选贤任能), Duke Huan of Qi's *Benefiting the People* (利民), the *Friendship* between Bao Shuya and Guan Zhong, the *Courtesy and Respect for the Worthy* (礼贤下士) of Lord Xinling of Wei, and Zhang Liang's *Courtesy* in obtaining the medical book. As shown in Figure 2, the excellent qualities reflected by the romantic stories of these figures, through the metaphorical mechanism, construct an ideal society in Sima Qian's description. The more than 100 heroic figures with qualities such as *Yielding to the Virtuous, Loyalty and Righteousness, Courtesy and Filial Piety, Wisdom and Courage, and Endurance* (让贤、忠义、礼孝、智勇、隐忍) in *Historical Records* metaphorically represent all kinds of people from all walks of life in Sima Qian's ideal society.

### 3.2. Metaphor of Tragic Sympathy

The tragic plot refers to the situation where the social status, moral level, etc. of the protagonist are *Equal* to that of Sima Qian himself, but they suffer injustice, so he admires and sympathizes with them, thus giving birth to a sense of grief. Zhu Guangqian said, for tragedy, what matters is not only great pain, but also the way of dealing with pain [18]. Without resistance to disaster, there is no tragedy. What arouses our pleasure is not the disaster, but the resistance.

The root of the tragic figures in *Historical Records* lies in the irreconcilable contradiction between them and the social environment. According to Han Zhaoqi's statistics, *Historical Records* records about 120 tragic figures in total [6]. For example, Concubine Qi (戚夫人), whose hands were cut off, eyes gouged out, ears cut off, and was placed in the toilet by Empress Lü (吕后). Han Xin, the Marquis of Huaiyin (淮阴侯韩信), who was a typical representative of the situation where "when the cunning hares are killed (狡兔死), the running dog is cooked (走狗烹); When the flying birds are flown away (飞鸟尽), the good bow is hidden (良弓藏)". Shang Yang, who made the people of Qin "not pick up things left by others on the road and have enough food and clothing for every household" (道不拾遗、家给人足); and Jing Ke, who assassinated the King of Qin. These tragic figures, as shown in Figure 2, just like Sima Qian himself, were once at the center of political struggles and fell in the tide of the times. However, what fell was their bodies, while their spirits and souls stand towering in the corridor of historical figures and are immortal [6].

The reason why there are so many tragic figures in Sima Qian's works is mainly because Sima Qian could empathize

with them due to his own castration, thus generating a sense of sympathy for the tragic figures [17]. Through the metaphorical mechanism, Sima Qian equated each tragic figure with himself. Sima Qian did not blame Han Xin for his rebellion, but only blamed him for rebelling too late, which is really a pity. Han Xin's death was due to the large environment and also to Liu Bang; wasn't Sima Qian's castration also the masterpiece of the large environment and the emperor?

### 3.3. Metaphor of Satirical Criticism

The satirical plot refers to the situation where the social status, moral level, etc. of the protagonist are Lower than that of Sima Qian himself, so he looks down on and hates them, thus giving birth to a sense of satire. Since its completion, *Historical Records* has been slandered by many official figures represented by Emperor Ming of Han (汉明帝), Wang Yun (王允), Cai Yong (蔡邕), Liu Zhiji (刘知几), and Wang Fuzhi (王夫之). The Slander Theory illustrates the intensity and obviousness of the satire and criticism in "Historical Records" from the side [10]. Li Changzhi also pointed out that Leaving aside all of Sima Qian's literary achievements, just in terms of satire, he should also be ranked first. *Historical Records* has exhausted the art of satire and reached the peak of satirical techniques [9].

Sima Qian said in *A Letter in Reply to Ren An* (《报任安书》) that When King Wen of Zhou was imprisoned, he expounded the *Book of Changes* (《周易》); when Confucius was in distress, he wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (《春秋》); when Qu Yuan was exiled, he composed the *Li Sao* (《离骚》); when Zuo Qiuming was blind, he had the *Discourses of the States* (《国语》); when Sun Bin had his feet cut off, he discussed military strategies; when Lü Buwei was banished to Shu, the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü* (《吕览》) was handed down; when Han Fei was imprisoned in Qin, he wrote *The Difficulties of Persuasion* (《说难》), *Solitary Indignation* (《孤愤》), and the three hundred poems in the *Book of Songs* were mostly written by sages and men of virtue out of indignation. These people all had something on their minds and could not find a way out, so they narrated past events and thought about the future [13].

Sima Qian discussed the purpose of his writing in a descriptive tone. Although he seemed to be praising the achievements of many sages, in fact, he was satirizing them. All these sages were persecuted by the large environment or small people at that time. Sima Qian himself was also the same. He was castrated just because of the incident of Li Ling. He criticized Liu Bang's rogue behavior, Emperor Wu of Han's excessive taxation, and the cruel criminal laws of the Han Dynasty. All these were the causes of Emperor Wu of Han's stupidity, ridiculousness, greed, and recklessness, and they were the inevitable results.

Due to the historical environment at that time, as shown in Figure 2, Sima Qian could only adopt the metaphorical mechanism and the narrative technique of positive descrip-

tion and side satire to achieve the purpose of criticism.

In short, the three plot choices in the narrative of *Historical Records* metaphorically represent Sima Qian's various thoughts and understandings of history, society, and life [10].

## 4. Microscopic Demonstration of the Metaphorical Thought in *Historical Records*

In the field of history, metaphor plays an irreplaceable role. What is narrated in *Historical Records* are specific and perceptible events, and each event naturally unfolds in a specific time and space. Therefore, the metaphor in *Historical Records* obtains a flesh-and-blood connection that cannot be separated from the context. Only in the real context can we analyze its metaphorical mechanism and thus enhance its vitality and inclusiveness. In this section, from the six microscopic perspectives of orientational metaphor, ontological metaphor, structural metaphor, and the syntagmatic metaphor (组合隐喻), paradigmatic metaphor, (聚合隐喻), and complex combination metaphor (复杂复合隐喻) proposed based on Saussure's syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, the narrative metaphor mechanism in *Historical Records* is explored under the perspective of conceptual metaphor mapping theory.

### 4.1. Orientational Metaphor

Orientational metaphor does not use one concept to metaphorically construct another concept, but constructs a complete concept system related to another concept. This spatial system is related to up and down, inside and outside, front and back, depth and shallowness, and center and periphery. Orientational metaphor originates from the real reflection of the human body in the physical environment, and it can perceive the spatial direction [8]. This spatial orientation is not arbitrary, but is based on body and cultural experience. Although the oppositions such as up and down and inside and outside are physical in nature, the Orientational metaphor varies with culture. In some cultures, the future is in front of us, while in others, it is behind us. The application of orientational metaphor in *Historical Records* is reflected in the following examples.

(1) 刘邦曰：“我欲易之，彼四人辅之，羽翼已成，难动矣。鸿鹄高飞，一举千里。羽翻已就，横绝四海。当可奈何！” [14]

This sentence comes from the *Biography of Marquis Zhang Liang*. (《留侯世家》) Liu Bang wanted to replace the crown prince, but those four people protected the crown prince, and the crown prince's wings had grown and could not be moved. The swan spreads its wings and flies high, flying thousands of miles across the sky. Its wings are fully grown, and it can go anywhere. Who can do anything about

it!

There are three orientational metaphors in Example (1), all of which are in a whole system concept.

First, more is up, less is down. The physical basis of this concept is that when more substances or objects are added to a container, the water level of the container will rise.

After Liu Bang established the Han Dynasty, he had always wanted to invite the four hermits, Dong Yuan Gong (东园公), Luli Xi (角里先生), Qi Li Ji (绮里季), and Xia Huang Gong (夏黄公), to assist him. However, these four hermits thought that Liu Bang was arrogant and rude, and they would rather flee to the deep mountains and forests to hide than become officials of the Han Dynasty. However, Liu Bang always missed these four people. When Liu Bang returned to the palace after defeating Ying Bu (黥布) and held a banquet, he saw four old men following the crown prince. After investigation, he found out that these four old men were exactly the four hermits he had always missed. Liu Bang was surprised and asked the reason. The four old men replied, you look down on scholars and often scold people. We don't want to be humiliated. But the crown prince is kind-hearted, loyal, filial, and courteous to the worthy. There is no one in the world who is unwilling to serve him. So we all came.

These four people assisted the crown prince, representing all the people under the sky, representing the masses, that is, many. And many means up, which is a typical marker of orientational metaphor.

Secondly, high status is up; Low status is down. The social and physical basis of this concept is that status is related to social or physical power [8]. The swan spreads its wings and flies high, soaring across the sky for thousands of miles. High means up, representing high social status and great power. The orientational metaphor here is that flying high means having great power. The crown prince (the target domain) is metaphorically compared to the swan spreading its wings and flying high (the source domain). Since he can fly high and cross the four seas, it means that his wings are fully grown, that is, he already has the power in hand.

Thirdly, Having control or force is up; Being subject to control or force is down [8]. At the same time, fully grown wings (the source domain) can also metaphorically imply that the strength of the crown prince (the target domain) has become so powerful that other forces cannot compete with him. This also implies a orientational metaphor: wings represent strength. Fully grown wings mean great strength.

Metaphors always lead us to view less familiar systems based on familiar systems. (Ankersmit, 1902: 16) Sima Qian used the six idioms, namely, assisted by four people (四人辅之), fully grown wings (羽翼已成), the swan flies high (鸿鹄高飞), soaring thousands of miles at one go (一举千里), feathers and wings are fully developed (羽翮已就), and

crossing the four seas (横绝四海) to let Liu Bang tell his beloved Consort Qi that he wanted to replace the crown prince, but those four people protected him and his wings had grown and he couldn't be moved. Empress Lü will really be your master! [14]

## 4.2. Ontological Metaphor

Spatial orientations such as up and down, front and back, on and off and so on have laid a solid foundation for human understanding of concepts, and physical objects and material experiences will further help humans understand the world. Once experience is regarded as discrete entities or unified types of matter, humans can classify, group and even quantify them, and through this way, further study them. Just as the basic experience of human spatial orientation has given birth to directional metaphors, the experience of human physical objects, especially the experience of their own bodies, has given birth to ontological metaphors. Ontological metaphor actually regards events, activities, emotions, thoughts, etc. as material entities [8]. For example, a competition is an event and it is regarded as a discrete entity.

(2) 余睹李将军恂恂如鄙人，口不能道辞。及死之日，天下知与不知，皆为尽哀。彼其忠实心诚信于士大夫也？谚曰：“桃李不言，下自成蹊。”此言虽小，可以谕大也。 [14]

Example (2) comes from *The Biography of General Li* (《李将军列传》), which means that General Li is as humble and honest as a rustic and is not good at speaking. But when he died, all the people in the world, whether they knew him or not, mourned for him. Isn't it his loyalty and honesty that moved the people? As the proverb says, Peach and plum trees do not speak, but a path is formed beneath them (桃李不言，下自成蹊). [14] Although this sentence is about a small matter, it can illustrate a great truth.

Peach and plum trees do not speak, but a path is formed beneath them. The character of General Li is materialized into beautiful peaches, and his noble character is as attractive and gathering people as the sweet and delicious peaches. Using the source domain beautiful peaches to map the target domain noble character is exactly the operation mechanism of ontological metaphor.

(3) 高祖曰：“夫运筹策帷帐之中，决胜千里之外，吾不如子房；镇国家，抚百姓，给饷馈，不绝粮道，我不如萧何；连百万之军，战必胜，攻必取，吾不如韩信。此三者，皆人杰也，吾能用之，此吾所以取天下也。项羽有一范增而不能用，此其所以为我擒也。” [14]

Example (3) comes from *The Basic Annals of Emperor Gaozu* (《高祖本纪》). Liu Bang frankly said that in terms of making strategies in the tent and winning battles thousands of miles away, he was not as good as Zhang Liang; in terms of guarding the country, pacifying the people, supplying provisions and ensuring the continuous supply of grain, he was not as good as Xiao He (萧何); in terms of commanding mil-

lions of troops and winning every battle and taking every city, he was not as good as Han Xin. These three people are all outstanding heroes, and he can use them. This is the reason why he can conquer the world. And Xiang Yu (项羽) had only one Fan Zeng (范增) but couldn't use him, so he was finally defeated.

First of all, the comparison between Liu Bang and Xiang Yu is the contrast of their characteristics, and different minds bring different results. Liu Bang is good at adopting the ideas of others and using their strengths. Metaphorically regarding thoughts and abilities as concrete tools is the operation mode of ontological metaphor.

Secondly, Liu Bang and Xiang Yu have different capacities, one is large and the other is small. Materializing the abstract concept of capacity and measuring it from a quantitative perspective belongs to the mixed use of ontological metaphor and directional metaphor.

### 4.3. Structural Metaphor

Metaphor is based on simple physical concepts such as up and down, inside and outside, object and substance. Like any other essential needs in the human conceptual system, it is indispensable and is one of the necessary conditions for human life. However, merely regarding something as a container substance with inside and outside doesn't explain anything. Just as the brain is metaphorically compared to a machine, humans always use various personification metaphors or specific terms to interpret spatial concepts. Structural metaphor provides the richest source for such interpretations. It enables humans to locate, reference, and quantify abstract concepts, and finally use a highly structured and clearly described familiar concept to construct an unfamiliar concept. [8]

(4) 廷尉李斯议曰：“周文、武所封子弟同姓甚众，然后属疏远，相攻击如仇讎，诸侯更相诛伐，周天子不能禁止。今海内赖陛下神灵一统，皆为郡县。诸子功臣以公赋税重赏赐之。甚易制。天下无异意，则安宁之术也。置诸侯不便。” [14]

This sentence comes from the chapter *The Basic Annals of the First Emperor of Qin* (《秦始皇本纪》). Li Si (李斯) frankly stated that King Wen (文王) and King Wu (武王) of the Zhou Dynasty enfeoffed many of their sons and kinsmen of the same surname as feudal lords. There were a lot of them. In later generations, their kinship gradually became estranged, and they attacked each other like enemies. The feudal lords fought and attacked each other, and the King of Zhou (周天子) was unable to stop them. Now, relying on His Majesty's divine power, the whole country has been unified and all are divided into prefectures and counties. The imperial princes and meritorious officials are generously rewarded with the public taxes. It is very easy to control them. [14]

Firstly, just as structural metaphor makes the unknown become known based on the systematic relevance in experi-

ence. Li Si used the drawbacks of the enfeoffment system in the Zhou Dynasty to praise the wisdom of the First Emperor of Qin in implementing the prefecture and county system. The context of Li Si's argument was that at that time, Wang Wan (王绾), the Prime Minister, and others submitted a memorial to the First Emperor of Qin, stating that since the feudal states had just been eliminated and the regions of Yan, Qi, and Chu were remote, it was necessary to enfeoff princes as feudal lords there, otherwise it would be impossible to maintain stability there. If Li Si directly negated it, it would not be convincing. Li Si referenced past experience to argue about the current issue, which was based on the systematic relevance of experience.

Secondly, *the Gradual Estrangement of Kinship* Uses Specific spatial distance to understand the abstract concept of blood relationship. Thirdly, control originally means using physical force to dominate people or things to cause the expected spatio-temporal displacement by the controller. Here, it refers to using the abstract concept of power to dominate the flow of property so that people will obey one's orders, which is also a mapping from the specific source domain to the target domain. Using power to control is also an excellent example of the application of structural metaphor.

(5) 宋义曰：“夫搏牛之虻不可以破虬虱，今秦攻赵，战胜则兵罢，我承其蔽；不胜，则我引兵鼓行而西，必举秦矣。故不如先斗秦赵。夫被竖执锐，义不如公；坐而运策，公不如义。” [14]

This sentence comes from the chapter *The Basic Annals of Xiang Yu* (《项羽本纪》). Song Yi (宋义) frankly said that a gadfly that bites a cow cannot be used to kill lice. Now that the Qin Dynasty is attacking the State of Zhao, if they win the battle, their troops will be exhausted, and we can take advantage of their exhaustion. If they don't win, then we will lead our troops to march westward with drums beating, and we will surely overthrow the Qin Dynasty. So it's better to let the Qin and Zhao armies fight first. In terms of wearing armor and holding weapons, I'm not as good as you, Xiang Yu. In terms of sitting and making strategies, you are not as good as me. [14]

Song Yi metaphorically compared the powerful Qin Dynasty to lice and the army of Zhang Han, a general of the Qin Dynasty, to gadflies. Since the ultimate goal of the Chu army was to defeat the Qin Dynasty (lice), it was meaningless to attack the army of Zhang Han (gadflies) that was besieging the State of Zhao. So instead of wasting troops to attack Zhang Han's army, it was better to hold back and watch the confrontation between the Qin and Zhao armies and then reap the benefits later. Here, gadflies and lice, the State of Zhao and the Qin Dynasty, using the former to metaphorically represent the latter, is structural metaphor.

In fact, many human experiences and activities are metaphorical in nature, and many conceptual systems are composed of metaphors [8].

#### 4.4. Syntagmatic Metaphor (组合隐喻)

Saussure once proposed two syntactic relations, that is, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. The syntagmatic relation is the relationship between a lexical item and other lexical items in the same sequence or the relationship between all the co-occurring components. [12] In fact, the syntagmatic relation can be simply regarded as a horizontal linear chain relationship. Inspired by this, this study proposes the syntagmatic metaphor. The so-called syntagmatic metaphor refers to the horizontal linear metaphor in the pattern of A + B + C + ... in a discourse segment, that is, the situation where multiple or various metaphors co-occur horizontally.

(6) 帝尧者，放勋。其仁如天，其知如神。就之如日，望之如云。 [14]

This sentence comes from the chapter *The Basic Annals of the Five Emperors* (《五帝本纪》). It means that Emperor Yao, named Fang Xun. His benevolence was like the sky that covered the earth, and his wisdom was like an omniscient god. People were attached to him like all things are attached to the sun, and they looked forward to him like people in a drought look forward to clouds. [14]

Firstly, in the first half of the sentence, such as, *His benevolence was like the sky* (其仁如天), *and his wisdom was like a god* (其知如神). Like is a metaphorical marker. Using the vastness of the sky to highlight the characteristics of benevolence and using the omniscience of the god to describe the wisdom of Emperor Yao, that is, using one structure to describe another structure, belongs to a typical structural metaphor.

Secondly, in the second half of the sentence, such as, People were drawn to him like all things are drawn to the sun (就之如日), and they looked forward to him like people in a drought look forward to clouds (望之如云), people (other than Emperor Yao) are like all things and people in a drought, and Emperor Yao is like the sun and clouds. Using all things are drawn to the sun (万物向阳) and people in a drought look forward to clouds (大旱望云) to metaphorically represent the relationship between Emperor Yao and his subjects is also a structural metaphor. The first half and the second half are the consecutive use of two structural metaphors. Therefore, this paper calls this structure syntagmatic metaphor, that is, the metaphor in the pattern of A + B.

#### 4.5. Paradigmatic Metaphor (聚合隐喻)

The paradigmatic relation proposed by Saussure was originally called the associative relation, which refers to the relationship between components that can be mutually replaced at a certain position in the structure, or the relationship between a component and other components that do not co-occur. [12] It can also be simply called the vertical relation or the choice relation. Inspired by this, this study proposes the paradigmatic metaphor. The so-called paradigmatic

metaphor refers to the vertical hierarchical metaphorical structure in the form of A above B below that appears simultaneously in the same discourse segment, that is, the situation where multiple or various metaphors are not arranged linearly and co-occur.

(7) 孔子曰：“岁寒，然后知松柏之后凋。举世混浊，清士乃见。” [14]

This sentence comes from the chapter *The Biographies of Bo Yi* (《伯夷列传》). It means that only in the cold winter can we see that the pine and cypress are the most resistant to cold. Only when the whole society is turbid can noble-minded people appear. [14]

Firstly, metaphorically comparing the abstract concept of character to the specific things like pine and cypress, and using the characteristics of the specific things like pine and cypress to understand the characteristics of the abstract concept of character belongs to ontological metaphor. Secondly, the tall and straight pine and cypress metaphorically represent noble character. Virtue is up [8], which is a directional metaphor. In the source domain of pine and cypress, there are both ontological metaphor and directional metaphor at the same time, and they do not co-occur in a linear arrangement. This paper calls the phenomenon that several or several kinds of metaphors co-occur in the same source domain as paradigmatic metaphor.

#### 4.6. Complex Compound Metaphor (复杂复合隐喻)

The complex compound metaphor refers to the situation where syntagmatic metaphor and paradigmatic metaphor co-occur, that is, the situation where the horizontal A + B metaphor pattern and the vertical A above B below metaphor pattern are used simultaneously in the same discourse segment.

(8) 郑人或谓子贡曰：“东门有人，其颡似尧，其项类皋陶，其肩类子产，然自要以下不及禹三寸，累累若丧家之狗。”子贡以实告孔子。孔子欣然笑曰：“形状，末也；而谓似丧家之狗，然哉！” [14]

This sentence comes from the chapter *The Family of Confucius* (《孔子世家》). It means that a man from the State of Zheng told Zi Gong that there was a man at the east gate. His forehead was like Yao's, his neck was like Gao Yao's (皋陶), his shoulders were like Zi Chan's (子产), but from his waist down, he was three inches shorter than Yu (大禹). He looked dejected like a stray dog. Zi Gong (子贡) found Confucius and told him what the man had said truthfully. Confucius smiled happily when he heard it and said, I don't deserve the praise for my appearance. But saying that I'm like a stray dog, that's really right! [14]

Firstly, in the sentence "His forehead is like Yao's (其颡似尧), his neck is like Gao Yao's (项类皋陶), his shoulders are like Zi Chan's (其肩类子产), like and similar to are typical

metaphorical words. Using the appearances of Yao, Gao Yao, and Zi Chan to describe Confucius shows that Confucius is knowledgeable, wise, and has an extraordinary appearance, etc., which is an excellent example of the application of structural metaphor. Here, the use of structural metaphor is represented by A.

Secondly, in the sentence *He looks dejected like a stray dog* (累累若丧家之狗), the word like is also a metaphorical word. The feature of being dejected is the mapping from the source domain of the stray dog to the target domain of Confucius, which is the highlighted feature. From the stray dog to Confucius, using the miserable state of the stray dog to describe Confucius' current downcast state is a structural metaphor based on the similarity of characteristics. Here, the use of structural metaphor is represented by B.

Thirdly, being dejected means being in low spirits and unhappy. Sadness is down. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 15), which is an excellent application of directional metaphor. Here, the use of directional metaphor is represented by C.

Finally, in *Being in Low Spirits* (萎靡不振), the abstract concept of spirit is understood as a specific material entity, similar to inflation is an entity (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 26), which is an application of ontological metaphor. Here, the use of ontological metaphor is represented by D.

In short, example (8) is a combined and superimposed use of structural metaphor, directional metaphor, and ontological metaphor. Specifically, the A + B pattern is the combined use of two structural metaphors, and the C + D pattern is the superimposed use of directional metaphor and ontological metaphor, or called the paradigmatic pattern. Therefore, the A + B + C + D pattern should be called a complex compound metaphor.

(9) 黥布, 天下猛将也, 善用兵, 今诸将皆陛下故等夷, 乃令太子将此属, 无异于使羊将狼, 莫肯为用, 且使布闻之, 则鼓行而西耳。[14]

This sentence comes from the chapter *The Basic Annals of Emperor Gaozu* (《高祖本纪》). It means that Ying Bu was a famous fierce general in the world and was good at using troops. Now all these generals were once on equal footing with Emperor Gaozu. If you let the crown prince command them, it would be no different from letting a sheep command wolves. No one would be willing to serve him. Moreover, if Ying Bu heard about it, he would march westward without hesitation. [14]

Firstly, the relationship between the crown prince (太子) and generals like Ying Bu is like the relationship between a sheep and a pack of wolves, which contains two interrelated structural metaphors, namely, the crown prince is the sheep (太子是羊); the generals are the pack of wolves (将领们是群狼). The characteristics of the sheep are docile and weak, and this characteristic is mapped from the source domain sheep to the target domain crown prince; the characteristics of the pack of wolves are fierce and powerful, and this similarity characteristic is mapped from the source domain of the

pack of wolves to the generals who once fought with Emperor Gaozu. A docile and weak sheep cannot command a fierce and powerful pack of wolves, so the gentle crown prince has difficulty commanding the tough generals.

Secondly, hear here means to hear, to be informed. From the perspectives of the speaker and the listener, "to hear, to be informed" can be metaphorically compared to the inlet and outlet ends of a pipeline respectively. This pipeline connects the speaker and the listener. Here, the language content is metaphorically compared to the water in the pipeline, so that the water in the source domain of the pipeline is mapped to the target domain of the language content, thus using the flow of water in the pipeline towards the outlet end to explain the transmission of sound waves from the speaker to the listener, and using the pressure of water flow in the water pipe to understand the linguistic force of the speaker's voice (language content).

Thirdly, the listener's brain (the target domain) is metaphorically compared to a container (the source domain). This container holds the heard sound information, which is an effective application of the container metaphor (container metaphor). That is, using the characteristics of a container holding substances to understand the brain's holding of heard language information.

Finally, the abstract information (the target domain) is metaphorically compared to the content (the source domain), which is an application of ontological metaphor.

This example is a complex compound metaphor that integrates structural, pipeline, container, and ontological metaphors. Multiple types of metaphors co-occur simultaneously, intertwined with each other and closely related.

## 5. Discoveries and Revelations

The three major types of narratives in *Historical Records* imply Sima Qian's spirit of ideals, sympathy and criticism. Among the more than 500,000 characters in the voluminous *Historical Records*, the 11 examples from a microscopic perspective are as insignificant as grains of sand. However, the grand masterpiece of *Historical Records* is precisely constructed by these grains of sand. In the entire narrative of *Historical Records*, metaphors are ubiquitous. For example, Xiang Yu's famous saying when he achieved success and yearned for his hometown, If one becomes wealthy and does not return to his hometown, it is like wearing embroidered clothes at night. Who will know about it! [14] (富贵不归故乡, 如衣绣夜行, 谁知之者) is a metaphor; the speaker who advised Xiang Yu to establish the capital in Xianyang said, People say that the Chu people are just monkeys with hats on. Sure enough. (人言楚人沐猴而冠耳, 果然) is a metaphor; Fan Kuai's famous reply to King Xiang, I would not even avoid death, so why should I decline a cup of wine! The King of Qin had the heart of a tiger and a wolf. He killed people as if he could never finish, and punished people as if

he were afraid that he couldn't do enough. The whole world rebelled against him. [14] (臣死且不避，卮酒安足辞！夫秦王有虎狼之心，杀人如不能举，刑人如恐不胜，天下皆叛之) is a metaphor; Han Xin's lament in prison, Sure enough, as people say, When the cunning hare is dead, the good hound is cooked; when the high-flying birds are gone, the good bow is put away; when the enemy state is defeated, the advisers are killed. Now that the world has been settled, I surely deserve to be killed! [14] (果若人言，‘狡兔死，良狗烹；高鸟尽，良弓藏；敌国破，谋臣亡’。天下已定，我固当亨！) is a metaphor, and so on. It's impossible to list them all.

To see the world in a grain of sand and to observe the vast sea in a drop of water. Microscopic details can also reveal the principles and laws of grand things. The above directional metaphors, ontological metaphors and structural metaphors constitute the basic patterns of Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Mapping Theory. These three basic patterns can be seen everywhere in *Historical Records*, and Sima Qian's application of them has reached a consummate level. The last three metaphorical patterns mentioned above are the proof. On the basis of skillfully applying the three basic patterns, Sima Qian also creatively used combined metaphors, aggregative metaphors and complex compound metaphors and other patterns. As we all know, *Historical Records* is not only a great historical masterpiece but also has high literary value. However, it is precisely because of its skillful use of metaphors that it also has profound linguistic value. In other words, metaphor is the bridge between history, literature and linguistics. Sima Qian's use of metaphors has reached the level of a means of cognition and a way of acting.

## 6. Conclusion

The best historical narrative is the one that is richest in metaphors and has the broadest vision. [1]169 *Historical Records* records the history of more than two thousand years from the time of the Yellow Emperor (黄帝) to the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (汉武帝). Its ideological achievements are unparalleled among the great historical works in China. In order to accelerate its dissemination and inheritance, it is necessary to explore the operating mechanism of its metaphorical thoughts.

Through research, it has been found that: Firstly, *Historical Records* is a masterpiece full of metaphors. Except for the *Ten Tables* (十表), the other four parts, namely the *Twelve Basic Annals* (十二本纪), *Thirty Hereditary Houses* (三十世家), *Seventy Biographies* (七十列传) and *Eight Treatises* (八书), all contain rich metaphors and carry the essence of the values of philosophy, history, literature, linguistics and even economics in China's feudal society. Secondly, Sima Qian is a great historian and also a master who

skillfully uses metaphors. He is good at using familiar, tangible and specific people, events or substances to explain unfamiliar, intangible and abstract counterparts, thus making the unknown become known, the abstract become concrete and the strange become familiar. Thirdly, metaphors run through the three plot types of romance, tragedy and satire in the narrative of *Historical Records*, respectively implying Sima Qian's spirit of ideals, sympathy and criticism. Fourthly, although Sima Qian did not explicitly put forward any metaphor theory, the skillful narrative pattern of using metaphors in *Historical Records* proves that in his subconscious, metaphor is not only a cognitive tool but also a social practice activity.

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## Conflicts of Interest

We declare that we have no financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations that can inappropriately influence our work, there is no professional or other personal interest of any nature or kind in any product, service and/or company that could be construed as influencing the position presented in, or the review of, the manuscript entitled.

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## Biography



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