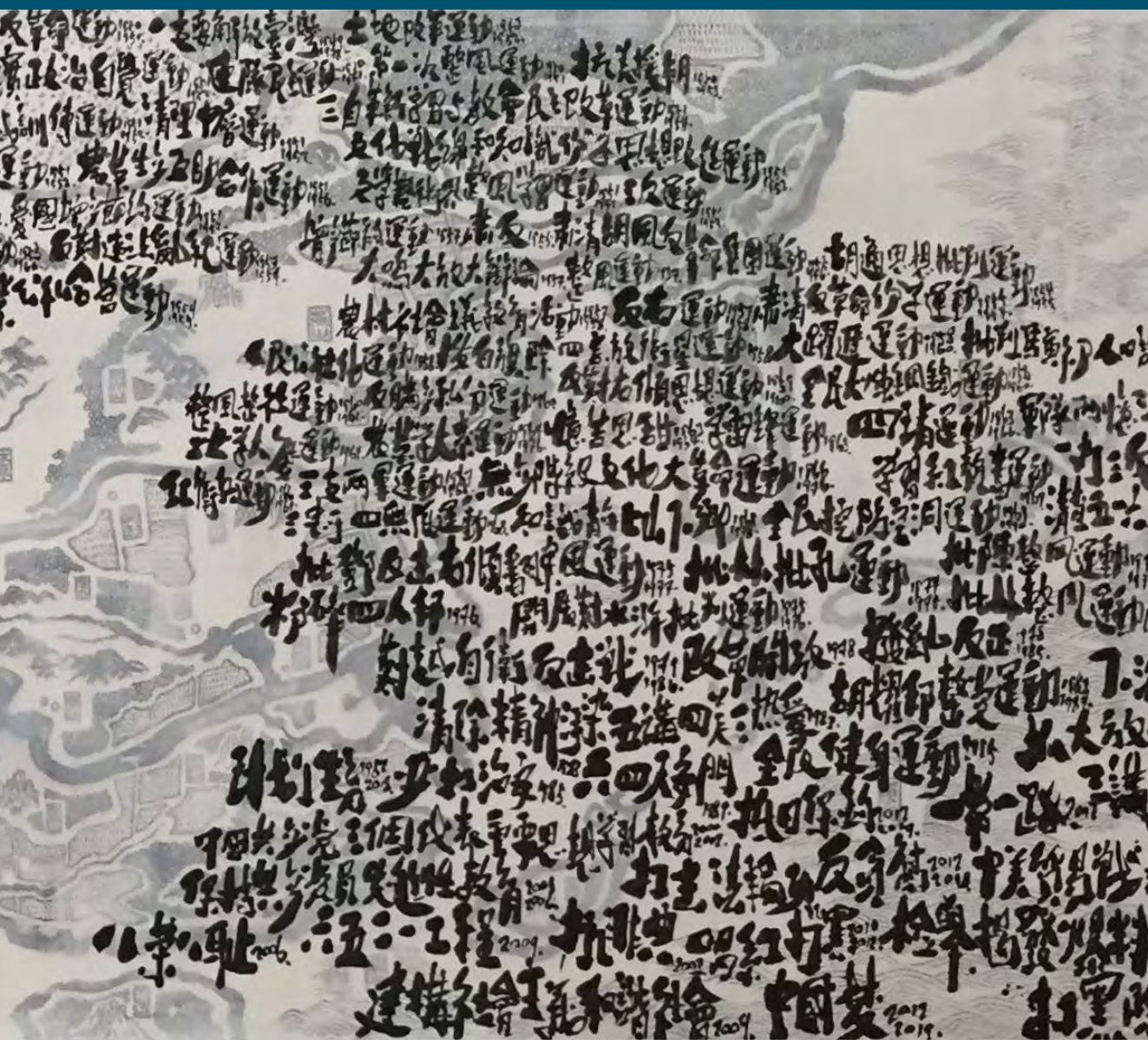


China and the World – the World and China

Volume I

Transcultural Perspectives on Pre-modern China

Edited by Joachim Gentz



China and the World – the World and China

Essays in Honor of Rudolf G. Wagner

Edited by
Barbara MITTLER,
Joachim & Natascha GENTZ
and Catherine Vance YEH

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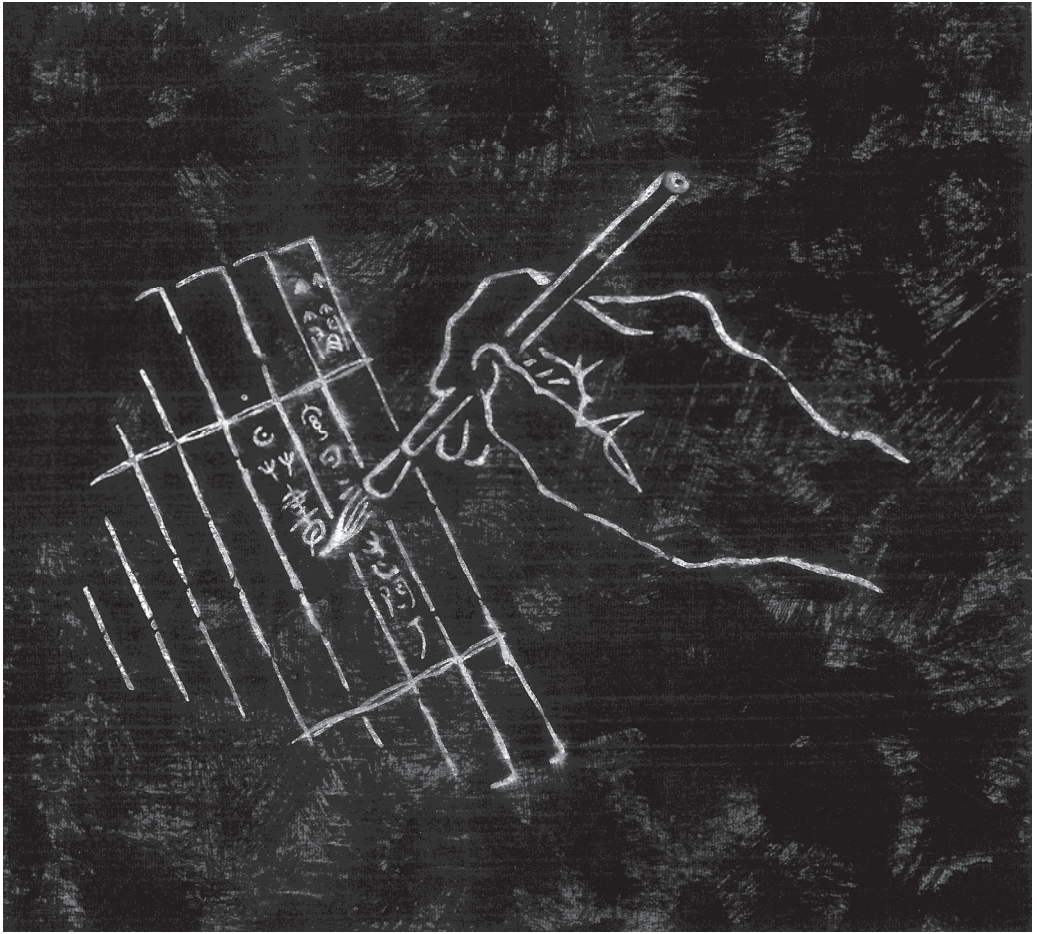
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Volume 1

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Das Alte China (Namy KIM)

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Editor's Introduction

Joachim GENTZ

Imagine the *Zhuangzi* as a manuscript the remnants of which are only accessible through quotes and Zhuangzi's *Shiji* biography. Imagine these quotes included cases of murder, suicide and theft and were transmitted in the form of an analytical philosophical commentary. Imagine nobody had ever paid attention to this but a historian who tried to make sense of this, identified different voices within this manuscript, interpreted the biography mainly as a eulogistic votive text and the quotes as relating to visual sources of the text that served as protection against the unruly powers of witchcraft and as means to channel obsessions. Imagine this historian would further identify in these quotes reflections of visual markers of textual modules and would use this particular material to discuss in more general terms the problem of translation between the visual and the textual, the historical fragment and the reconstruction of manuscripts. Imagine that these reflections of the historian in turn would be used by a Russian poet-exile to create and propagate world literature.

This is exactly what this volume is about.

The contributions seem to consist of random themes, but they create a conglomerate which evidently responds to an event that each of the contributors is glad to have encountered, an event that embodies (do events have bodies? Some do ...) the crossing over, the mixing of categories, the blurring of conceptual boundaries that all of these contributions try to get the knack of in one form or the other. Like the other three volumes of this set, which consequently is not what it looks like, this first volume is dedicated to Rudolf Georg Wagner. It compiles the contributions relating to the pre-modern period and arranges them in a chronological order. This order reveals thematic clusters that correspond to the three main periods of Chinese pre-modern history. While the first six contributions on the early China period mainly focus on conceptual questions of text interpretation and reconstruction, the following five on medieval China all deal with religious topics, whereas the last four contributions, mainly on the late imperial period, address issues of the entangled relationship between the self and the exterior.

In "Zhuangzi's Twinkle and Methods without Truth", Joachim Gentz explores the possibility of defining limits of interpretation when reading a text like the *Zhuangzi*. Discussing a range of interpretation theories he refutes earlier hermeneutical approaches that interpret the *Zhuangzi* as a mystical, skeptical, relativist, irrational, paradoxical or humorous text. Using three well-known stories from the *Zhuangzi*, related to the animals fish, butterfly and ox, he proposes the possibility of reading the *Zhuangzi* from a "physiognomical" perspective that focuses on the semanticization of literary signs in the text and reads them as literary codes that provide clues for the interpretation of the stories and thus allow new readings of old stories.

In his inaugural lecture on "Materialität antiker Handschriften – Beispiele aus China" Enno Giele who succeeded Rudolf G. Wagner in the position of Professor of Classical Chinese in Heidelberg, differentiates two senses of the term "materiality". On the one hand the term refers to the fact that something is material and exists as a physical body. This is subject to metaphysics, ontology, phenomenology, materialism and the philosophy of mind. On the other it is related to the question of how the materiality of an object is constituted, how it is experienced, which material an object is made of and what practical and theoretical consequences arise as a result of its particular materiality. In his application to (Chinese) texts which he defines as materializations of linguistic expression Giele focuses on the second sense of the term and points out that scriptualization (Verschriftlichung) of language has to be understood as a broad spectrum of oral and written texts with varying degrees

of mixed formats which often represent stages in a long process of scripturalization, and he discusses examples of the impact that materiality can have on a text.

Anke Hein's contribution takes us a step further towards the question of the reception, transmission and reconstruction of early manuscripts. In her "Concepts of 'Authenticity' and the Chinese Textual Heritage in Light of Excavated Texts", she provides a systematic overview of the history of textual scholarship on the authenticity of Chinese texts and the related methodologies, principles and theories of how to work with excavated texts. Taking the *Guicang* 歸藏 as an example, she illustrates how varying copies of one text are transmitted in different lines and how the fluid nature of early Chinese texts renders questions about an authentic *urtext* inappropriate and misleading. Scholars should instead focus on "the environment and the borders of the text at hand as well as different stages in the transmission process. Such a proceeding regards the different textual witnesses in their own rights as valuable instances in the history of textual transmission and mirror of the circumstances of their production."

Chen Zhi addresses the question of textual variety by looking at different genres of biographical writing. In his "Biographical Genres and Biography: The Case of Yan Zun" he compares the four extant biographies of Yan Zun 嚴遵 (i. e., Zhuang Zun 莊遵) in the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*History of the Han dynasty*), the *Bowuzhi* 博物志 (*Account of Wide-ranging Matters*), a famous *zhiguai* 志怪 (records of anomalies) work, the *Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳 (*Account of Aloof Scholars*), a typical *zhiren* 志人 (Records of Individuals) work, and the *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 (*Records of the State of Huayang*), one of the earliest extant local gazetteers. He demonstrates how the biographers portrayed different images of Yan Zun as a Confucian moral hero, as a Daoist hermit and as a witness of supernatural and legendary extraordinary events and how the history of biographical writing developed from historical records to early fiction.

In "The Rule of Law in Eastern Han China: Some Cases of Murder, Suicide, Theft, and Private Dispute", Robin Yates introduces some of the recently published Eastern Han legal documents excavated at the Wuyi guangchang (May 1st Square) in Changsha 長沙五一廣場東漢簡牘, from a well that was filled with approximately 7,000 wooden boards and bamboo slips, many of which were dated, from the archives of the local commandery or county government, then known as Linxiang 臨湘. Yates provides a detailed introduction to the site and the documents. He reconstructs some of the administrative procedures of managing these crimes and legal issues brought to the attention of the Han authorities in ancient Changsha and is especially interested in "the voices of ordinary commoners making petitions, explaining the circumstances of their actions, and speaking about their daily lives, including their complicated family relations." He reconstructs some of these voices meticulously and provides analyses and translations of the documented cases.

Christoph Harbsmeier also reconstructs a voice of the past by analyzing commentarial passages to the *Mengzi* by Zhao Qi (d. AD 201) in his "Zhao Qi 趙岐, a case of Late Han pedantic conceptual analysis." He writes against the common assumption of scholars following Dobson's *Late Han Chinese* (1964) that Zhao Qi's commentary predominantly contains, among other things, Eastern Han literary or colloquial Chinese translations of the text. Instead, he argues that Zhao Qi's commentary operates on many different conceptual levels which he illustrates one by one. Apart from providing Eastern Han paraphrases of the *Mengzi*, Zhao Qi also explains reference-in-context rather than lexical meaning, sorts out systematically misleading expressions, explains difficult characters, and provides conceptual analysis of some that appears self-evident, thus bringing out semantic complexities in apparently simple expressions. This last point is what Harbsmeier is most interested in. He points out that "the exciting and highly philosophical task Zhao Qi is undertaking is to try and understand what exactly it is that everyone is already understanding... He problematizes the self-evident. Like a Chinese proto-Wittgenstein *avant la lettre*."

In the following contribution “Antlers? Or Horns? Towards Understanding Gan Bao 干寶, the Historian”, Michael Schimmelpfennig equally proposes a more precise reading that reveals a further dimension of sophistication in the text of Gan Bao's (d. AD 336) *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (*Records of an Inquest into the Spirit-Realm*). From the preface of the *Soushen ji*, Schimmelpfennig extracts the main historiographical principles laid out therein to then “conduct a sample study to see to what degree even a reconstructed Ming edition of the *Soushen ji* does confirm Gan Bao's approach as outlined in his preface.” By checking Gan Bao's text against historical sources Schimmelpfennig detects passages of a hidden commentary in the text which he thinks must have been added later to the *Soushen ji*. The core text reveals the motivation for compiling the *Soushen ji* from extant sources: “As a historian, perhaps somewhat ostensibly, to preserve every bit of evidence as long as it is impossible to decide which account may truly represent an event. As a believer, to very consciously amass evidence in support of his conviction of the existence of spirits and the workings of a spiritual realm.” With this contribution Schimmelpfennig opens the section that deals with religion and the strange in medieval China.

In “Kumārajīva's ‘Voice’?”, Michael Radich reconstructs another voice of the past by applying an entirely different methodology. Using software-assisted methods, Radich compares the phraseology used in Kumārajīva's texts (letters/responses ascribed to Kumārajīva in the correspondence with Huiyuan [T1856] and Kumārajīva's comments to the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* [in T1775]) with phraseologies used in texts by Huiyuan (letters/responses ascribed to Huiyuan in the exchange with Kumārajīva) and Sengzhao (sole-authored works ascribed to Sengzhao, as collected in the *Zhao lun* 肇論 [T1858]) and others (Comments in T1775 ascribed to Sengzhao, Daosheng and Daorong). Radich arrives at the conclusion that “it is possible to identify various features that distinguish the styles of Kumārajīva and Huiyuan. We also saw that we can identify quite a robust set of stylistic features that distinguish the ‘voice’ of Sengzhao not only from that found in the works ascribed to his master as an individual, but also, in most cases, from the translation corpus of the Kumārajīva workshop.” In his analyses of the distinct voices Radich provides explanations for the differences in styles in regard to the educational and social background of the individuals. “By contrast, applying the same methods, I was unable to derive a clear stylistic signature distinguishing the individual writings of Kumārajīva from the corporate products of his translation enterprise.” Radich also provides possible explanations for this.

In her “Transcending Boundaries: Afterlife Conceptions in Entombed Epitaphs and Votive Steles of the Six Dynasties' Period”, Friederike Assandri deals with another corpus of religious texts. Her main source is a large number of inscriptions on 5th and 6th centuries grave epitaphs (*muzhi* 墓誌) and votive steles (*zaoxiangji* 造像記) from northern China, accessible in digitized form in a database of Nanbeichao Stone inscriptions 魏晉南北朝實物語料庫. Assandri provides a thorough introduction into the historical context of this textual genre, and analyzes the terminology on imagery employed in the inscriptions which “reflect a broad and diversified state of the field of religious belief concerning the afterlife, which provides a probably more realistic, albeit inconsistent, picture of Six Dynasty religion and religious beliefs than the received written sources.” She focuses in particular on examples that show different facets of conceptual interaction between Buddhist and Daoist traditions concerning traditional Chinese notions of afterlife such as the otherworldly geography, the conflation of paradises and ascent, the two souls and their abodes etc. and concludes that “eclectic mixtures of afterlife conceptions expressed in the epigraphic materials document that Buddhist beliefs did not necessarily replace older conceptions; instead, they supplemented them and interacted with them.”

Wang Yizhou explores traveling motives in yet another genre in her “Motifs Traveled with Intentions: Mapping Tang China and the World through Pictorial Screens in Nara Period Japan

(710–794)”. She analyzes four well-preserved screen panels, each with the design of animal figures as well as human figures playing musical instruments or hunting on horseback that were previously used as interior furnishings in the daily life by the Emperor Shōmu 聖武 (701–756, r. 724–749), and are now stored in the North Section of the Shōsō-in Repository in Nara. Wang postulates “that the designs on the screens were not just decorative patterns, but a ‘mapping’ of motifs or imagery that traveled with their own agencies and intentions, and which also contained a political symbolism.” The paper shows how prototypes of imagery of beauties and animals under trees from Tang paintings and Sogdian textiles, hunting scenes from Tang metal works as well as Buddhist and Daoist symbols from texts and bronze mirrors were composed in a new visual utopian narrative that served to support imperial political authority by sacralizing the imperial power through mythmaking and envisioning an imaginary paradise that recalled Tang China and even the more distant world.

Barend ter Haar’s “Studying Fears of Witchcraft in Traditional China: A Close Reading of Three Examples from Hong Mai’s *The Records of a Listener*” continues in the religious realm. He neither looks at inscriptions nor screens but at several cases from the Southern Song official and chronicler Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123–1202), collected in *The Record of a Listener* (*Yijian zhi* 夷堅志), a collection of fantastic stories which Ter Haar regards as “quite comparable to the fieldwork materials of the cultural anthropologist of the 20th century, who also relied on informants and was by no means necessarily aware of their prejudices and selectiveness.” In these cases Ter Haar finds details “surprisingly close to the Western witchcraft paradigm”: accusations based on the classical suspicions typical of closed societies about the sudden wealth of an outsider, sexual escapades with the devil, putative worship of poisonous crawlies (*gu* 蠱), the use of magical techniques to dominate the local community and others as well as the role of torture and interrogation in shaping a narrative. He therefore argues that the phenomenon of “witchcraft” existed in China and “was sufficiently similar to be labelled with the same Western terminology and be subjected to a similar social-historical analysis.” The distorted social reality depicted in these stories does not reflect the actual practices of shamans, mediums and other ritual specialists, they rather “tell us a lot about the fears and concerns of the people who are telling these stories”. Deconstructing the narratives against the background of contemporary social and religious practices, Ter Haar arrives at the conclusion that “all examples clearly involve the fear of evil ritual or evil worship that is used to attack the persons who are the protagonists of our stories. They do not tell of real practices, but probably stem from local jealousies and local rows that then lead to the particular kind of backbiting that we now see as the fear and accusation of witchcraft.”

In “*Chi* 癡, *pi* 癖, *shi* 嗜, *hao* 好: Genealogies of Obsession in Chinese Literature”, Li Wai-yee analyzes Chinese reflections on “balance and tension between control and disequilibrium and the boundaries between creation and disorder” from *Zuo zhuan* to *Honglou meng* and thus bridges over from early and medieval China (and the realm of the strange) to late imperial China. She starts from the observation that “in the Chinese context, excessive interest in external things, especially things involving sensual appeal, has often been judged negatively. The Chinese words [...] all imply excess or imbalance in the relationship between people and things or between people and their emotions.” Li uses “obsession” conceptually as a social and cultural category and analyzes a broad range of obsessions while always analyzing the respective categories of the troubled boundaries between the self and external reality to show the affinities between their positive and negative ramifications. She thereby maps “a web of associations and deepens our understanding of each example through its possible link to related conceptualizations of how vagaries of intense mental and affective focus distort or define the relationship between the self and the world.”

In “Entangled Histories: Insights gained from a Hodological Approach to the *Blue Beryl's* Thanka on Metaphors of the Body”, Elisabeth Hsu presents a new reading of the *Blue Beryl* thanka texts by analyzing the interrelation between text and image. The thanka texts are illustrations of a commentary to a Tibetan medical text. To be precise, they are part of a series of seventy-nine paintings on canvas, so-called thankas, produced within a fairly short period (from 1687–1697) that illustrate the late 17th century *Blue Beryl* (*Vaidhurya sngonpo*), a commentary by Sangye Gyamtso (Sangs-Rgyas-Rgya-Mtsho, 1653–1705) on the Tibetan medical root texts of the *Four Treatises* (*Rgyud bzhi*, 8th–12th cent). Taking the curtains painted in these thankas as boundary markers of the text, she divides the thanka text on Plate VI into four sections, where each comprises a different set of metaphors and/or images. Hsu finds that some metaphors of the body depicted in the thanka correspond closely to comparable ones in Chinese medical learning, alongside others known from Galenic medicine and Ayurveda. She thus corroborates the well-known assumption about Tibetan *sowa rigpa* medicine as a product of entangled histories.

Mark Elliott continues to reflect on translation issues in his “Manchu Sources and the Problem of Translation”. He first points out the relatively poor state of Manchu language learning – “because the thread connecting modern academic practice with the literary Manchu language of the Qing has been broken – and was broken a while ago – we face special challenges in dealing with Manchu that we do not face in dealing with Chinese, or even Latin” – and then proceeds to give an overview of the development of Translation Studies as a discipline which helps us to frame questions differently when we translate today. It can help to “sensitize us in our own roles as translators, and force us to be much more aware of what we are doing. A more conscious translation, one that does not pretend to perfect knowledge or to immaculate equivalence, is, I think, to be preferred, especially in the case of Qing-period Manchu, a language for which very few of us indeed can claim native fluency and which, for that reason, none of us can pretend to come ‘naturally.’ This is always going to be a fraught process, even a violent one.” Elliott then proceeds to discuss Manjurists’ approaches to Manchu translations and the state of Manchu Studies. In a last part Elliott illustrates his own approach by presenting his translation and analysis of a Manchu rescript written by the Yongzheng emperor in response to a memorial submitted by Jingzhou garrison general Unaha about local conditions and grain prices in Hubei in the summer of 1727.

In the last contribution to this volume, “Kalmyk Echoes, Torghut Returns: Poet-Exiles in a Time of Shrinking Frontiers”, Haun Saussy propounds yet another case of how Europeans and Chinese have dealt with their “friend of the steppes” by investigating Pushkin’s and Qianlong’s literary responses to their different encounters with the Kalmyks in the 18th and 19th century. He demonstrates how these literary responses to the subdued “remnants of conflict among empires, survivors of expansion” became a part of the development of the idea of “world literature” (with Goethe being inspired for his idea of “Weltliteratur” by the Chinese novel *Haoqiu zhuan* 好逑傳 (*The Pleasing History*)) while the emerging world market provided the condition of possibility for this idea) and argues that this literature was produced as an anticipation of a recognition of the wide ranging power of the Russian and Chinese empires, “voicing by proxy what the Kalmyk/Torghut will say back to Pushkin’s column or Qianlong’s stele” that stages “a quasi-encounter in verse between the imaginations of the expanding Russian and Qing empires, at the expense of nomad groups that could hardly find recognition except as vehicles of that expansion.”

This is the last of the voices that speak in this first volume trying to make other voices speak of a past far back in China before it entered the modern age. Many of the authorial voices of this volume have been inspired by the voice of Rudolf G. Wagner, a voice that in turn has always attempted to inspire voices of the Chinese past by applying what he called “interpolative” reading and translation techniques to early Chinese texts and a meticulous reconstruction of the voices’ cultural contexts and rules of discourse in excitingly unruly ways.