This volume collects the proceedings of the third and last meeting of the conference series “Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a Comparative Perspective”, which took place at the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, on October 4-6, 2001. The conference series, generously funded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, Taipei, is part of the “International Project on Chinese and Comparative Historiography”, initiated by Thomas H. C. Lee (City College of New York, CCNY) and supported by the City College of New York, the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut, Essen, and the National Taiwan University, Taibei.1

This conference series was planned as a new kind of comparative approach which stresses the need to study historiography and historical thinking in the form of an intercultural dialogue. A promising start in this direction was made about ten years ago and has now been made available in published form.2 As historical memory substantially contributes to the shaping of human beings’ identity—the identity of individuals as well as of communities and nations—such an intercultural dialogue naturally moves beyond the narrowly circumscribed arena of academic studies. It converges with a wider intercultural discourse which is unanimously being advocated to avoid the much-discussed “clash of civilizations”.

Our project gained an unwanted, gruesome actuality from the terrorist attacks of September 11, some three weeks before the Wolfenbüttel conference. Considering the uncertainties of air travel in

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1 For information on the setting up of this international project in 1996 and its activities since, see the website www.chinesehistoriography.com developed by the City College of the New York Asian Studies Program.
2 Rüsen 2002. It should be noted that this attempt concurred with other similar attempts aimed at broadening the intercultural approach in the study of historiography and historical thinking such as, e.g., Fuchs and Stuchtey 2002 and, with the focus on Chinese historiography and historical thinking, Schneider and Weigelin-Schwiedzik 1996; Wei Gelin and Shi Naide 1999; Wang and Iggers 2002. Presently, the most ambitious undertaking in the field of comparative historiography is the establishment of the new Brill on-line journal Historiography East and West, jointly edited by Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedzik and Axel Schneider.
the days thereafter, it was an astonishing event in itself that a sizeable group of Chinese and Western scholars eventually gathered at the Herzog August Bibliothek to meet in the hall of the library, which houses a famous historical Bible collection.\(^3\) As conveners of the conference, we want to express our hearty gratitude to Professor Emeritus Yü Ying-shih (Princeton University) and his wife, who did not hesitate to make the trip to Germany and take part in the conference, Professor Yü chairing and greatly inspiring our discussions as the most senior scholar there.

Although the cruel reality of those horrible events cast a shadow over the conference, it showed us to be united in holding with passion and assurance to the idea of an intercultural dialogue,\(^4\) which cannot tame a bursting world, but appears to be the most suitable alternative to the ancient Chinese vision of the sage-emperor Shun’s playing the zither and singing the “Air of the South” (“Nanfeng” 南風) in order to bring into consonance the cosmic forces in chaos.

The original purpose of the Wolfenbüttel Conference was to discuss the two broad topics of “ideology” and “historical criticism”. These two topics relate to the political and cognitive dimensions of our historical mind, respectively.\(^5\) In preparing the conference, however, it became more and more clear that these two large topics are closely linked to each other by the question of historical truth. Here then we were confronted with yet another major issue. Although often not treated explicitly, the question of truth is rightly said to lie at the core of historical thinking and historiography in any historiographic tradition. To be ignorant of it makes us less able to understand the multifaceted relationship between the political and cognitive dimensions of historical consciousness. What is specifically Chinese about this particular relationship, compared to the Western, or any other non-Western, historiographic tradition? And how did it evolve in the Chinese historiographic tradition?

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\(^3\) We regret that because of problems with air travel in the wake of September 11, professors Vinay Lal (University of California, Los Angeles) and Brian Moloughney (University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand) were forced to cancel their trips to Germany.

\(^4\) For a report on the conference, see Lee 2002.

\(^5\) For the distinction of the five dimensions of historical consciousness—the semantic, cognitive, aesthetic, rhetorical, and political dimensions—see Rüsen 2001: 62-66.
To highlight the scope of these questions, let us once again glance at an often discussed and highly puzzling instance of Chinese historical criticism, which concerns one—perhaps the best known one—of Confucius’s comments contained in the Zuozhuan 左傳. 6 In his comment, Confucius praises the court historiographer Dong Hu 董狐 as an excellent historian, although the latter’s entry concerning the assassination of Duke Ling 靈公 of Jin 晉 in 607 B.C. conceals, or deliberately misrepresents, the facts of what had actually happened. Confucius’s comment is indeed bewildering. As Burton Watson has put it: “If the Gospels have their dark sayings, we must perhaps admit that this remark of Confucius represents one of the dark sayings of the Tso chuan [Zuozhuan], an utterance that will never be completely comprehensible to the modern reader.”

This is hardly an enthusiastic encouragement to ponder the concept of truth and objectivity in Chinese historiography. Yet there are two points which may add a new motivation for rethinking the passage in question and reveal the enormous instructive potential of this foremost case of Chinese historical comment.

Firstly, it is important to note that Confucius’s comment resulted not only in affirming Dong Hu’s moralizing viewpoint, but also in privileging the Zuozhuan account of the whole affair over the versions contained in the other two early commentaries to the Spring and Autumn Annals 春秋, the Gongyang Zhuan 公羊傳, and the Guliang Zhuan 毅梁傳. Apart from some minor differences, the latter both lack a narrative element which is essential to the Zuozhuan version and to Confucius’s comment as well, namely Zhao Dun’s 趙盾, attempt to flee across the border. 8 This suggests that historical criticism in China does not necessarily function as an agency of

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6 In Chinese historiography these comments, along with similar comments in the Zuozhuan marked by the opening phrase “the Gentleman remarks” (junzi yue 君子曰), represent the earliest stock of commentarial and reflective remarks separated from the narration; see Henry 1999 and David Schaberg’s article in this volume.


8 With this dramatizing element of the flight across the border, the Zuozhuan makes use of a motif which recurs prominently in the Shiji biographies of Shang Yang 商鞅 and the Lord of Mengchang 孟嘗君, see Yang and Yang 1979: 135, 137, and 157, 159. Whereas the Gongyang Zhuan is silent about Zhao Dun’s progress after departing from the Jin capital, we are briefly told in the Guliang Zhuan that he came not further than to the suburban area of the Jin capital (jiao 郊), which was still at least a two days’ journey from the next border. See Gongyang Zhuan, Xuan 2nd year, 15.2280a; Guliang Zhuan, Xuan 2nd year, 12.2412b.
questioning, doubt, and revision, but on the contrary might even authenticate or privilege a certain historical account.9

Secondly, Dong Hu’s entry in the court annals, though traditionally lauded as “a record which does not conceal anything” (shufa bu yin 書法不隱), was not made sine ira et studio, but ostensibly with certain political motives.10 Moreover, we should not forget its deadly consequences. Only ten years later, when Zhao Dun had already died, a former favorite of Duke Ling used Dong Hu’s vicious record to instigate the military to raid the Zhao clan. In the ensuing massacre, almost the entire clan was wiped out; the family survived thanks only to a posthumously born child.11 This is the plot of a play which through Voltaire’s L’Orphelin de la Chine has become part of world literature. In short, the case of Dong Hu’s record demonstrates par excellence the thin borderline between historiography and ideology in the Chinese historiographic tradition.

Yet in studying historical comment and historical criticism in China, we will find that the uncovering of ideological implications, purposeful distortions, and opinionated and biased views, is meaningless apart from a background of historical truth to judge them by. This explains the decision to enlarge the original scope of the conference by adding a section on “Historical Truth”, with which this essay collection begins. Due to the nature of this topic, three of this section’s five China-related articles deal with Chinese historiography and historical thinking in ancient China—the “inner” essays by Martin Kern, Heiner Roetz, and Stephen Durrant. The two “outer” essays by Wolfgang Behr and Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, however, make it clear that the question of truth was relevant throughout Chinese history.

This is followed by a section on “Historical Comment and Historical Criticism”, as the central part of the present volume. Here too, three articles focus on China’s early historical works, in particular the two commentaries to the Spring and Autumn Annals, the Zuozhuan

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9 Michael Quirin has lucidly pointed to this function of textual and historical criticism in China, albeit with regard to the Chinese canon and the Chinese exegetical tradition: “The aim of these critical tendencies did not, and could not, lie in the elimination of the indispensable reference to the canon, but on the contrary it lies in its preservation through bridging the cracks in the continuity and homogeneity of tradition” [our translation]; see Quirin 1999: 25.

10 Again, from the account in Zuozhuan, Xuan 2nd Year, 21.1867b, we learn that Dong Hu himself made his record public at court. By so doing, he grossly interfered in the process of selecting and installing a successor to Duke Ling.

11 See Shiji 43.1782-1785.
and the *Gongyang Zhuan*—the essays by David Schaberg, Yuri Pines, and Joachim Gentz. This section concludes with Thomas H. C. Lee’s analysis of Hong Mai’s 洪邁 (1123-1202) attitude and standards for selecting historical materials in his massive *Yijian Zhi* 夷堅志 (Records of Yijian). It takes us down to the Song 宋 period (960-1279), which must be viewed as a major era of Chinese historical thinking. Special mention is due to Kai Vogelsang’s essay, which stands out from all other articles in this volume in that it takes an explicitly comparative approach, comparing the underlying concept and the use of historical judgment in the Chinese and Western historiographic traditions.

Different from the first two sections, the third and last section, “At the Threshold of Modernity and Beyond: Historical Truth, the Historian’s Trustworthiness, and Ideology”, deals with the early modern and modern period, focusing on a problem that is ostensibly specific to this period: it witnessed an increasingly sophisticated research methodology aimed at achieving historical objectivity, but at the same time historiography seems to have become more and more prone to ideological misuse. If this is the case for the West, then how about China? Chow Kai-Wing and Marion Eggert discuss the underlying problem of the tension between history and ideology with regard to the rise of “evidential research” (考證) in eighteenth-century China and Korea. Next, Achim Mittag indicates that this development was paired with a growing awareness of the problem of the historian’s trustworthiness. The following two articles by Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik and Nicola Spakowski follow the line down to the second half of the twentieth century, discussing the existing tension between historical truth and ideology in the field of Chinese Marxist historiography and didactics of history teaching in the PRC.

It was clear from the outset that three such broad topics could not be studied in a comprehensive way and we are well aware of significant lacunae in each of the three sections. We want to remind

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12 See Lee 2004.
13 In particular, this concerns the great advance in historical criticism which is connected with the Song statesman and scholar Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086). Regrettably, Professor Ji Xiao-bin (University of Rutgers, Camden, NJ), a leading expert on this particular topic, was prevented from joining the conference, but he kindly sent us a first draft of his paper entitled “Sima Guang’s (1019-1086) Kaoyi as a Paradigm of Chinese Historical Criticism? A Preliminary Investigation of the Use of
the reader that the emphasis lays upon the intercultural comparison. This, however, did not place an individual researcher or discussant under the strain of taking a comparative approach; rather, he or she was only required to present his or her piece of scholarly work in such a way that it enhances the intended intercultural dialogue. During the conference, we did take a good step forward along the path of such a dialogue. Yet this blissful moment can hardly be documented in a collection of the papers presented, however carefully they were later revised and amended. To retain the comparative aspect in some way we chose to include one essay in each of the three sections, in which the respective topic is explored from a non-Chinese perspective—the essays by Petra Bahr, Jörn Rüsen, and Horst Walter Blanke. We regret that the focus of all these three essays heading each section is on the Western historiographic tradition, but this shortcoming is to some extent compensated for by the rather highly theoretical level of discussion in each of these theme-setting essays. Within the three sections the articles are loosely arranged according to the chronological order of the subject matter treated.

We owe sincere thanks to many friends and colleagues, in the first place to the contributors of this volume, but also to those who presented papers, which, on the authors’ explicit wishes, were not included in this volume—Jochen Martin (Freiburg University), Gert Melville (Dresden University), and Monika Übelhörr (Marburg University). We further wish to thank Mechthild Leutner (Free University, Berlin) and Hans van Ess (Munich University) for their thoughtful comments on the papers by Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik and Nicola Spakowski, and Stephen Durrant, respectively. Also we would like to extend our thanks to all other participants who by their enthusiastic engagement in our discussions made the conference into a memorable academic event—Ludwig Ammann (Freiburg), Maria

Sources in *Zizhi Tongjian*. Readers interested in the topic are referred to Professor Ji’s forthcoming monograph, *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press. Further, we would like to draw the reader’s attention to the special section on “Facetten der historischen Kritik in China” (Facets of Historical Criticism in China), edited by Achim Mittag and Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, in *Oriens Extremus* 43 (2002), which collects six articles by Achim Mittag, Joachim Gentz, Hans van Ess, Monique Nagel-Anger mann, Hoyt Tillman, and Nicola Spakowski, which were originally presented in a panel of the XXXV. Deutschen Orientalistentag (XXXVth Meeting of German Orientalists), in Bamberg 2001.
Khayutina (Bochum), Monique Nagel-Angermann (Bielefeld), Michael Quirin (Bonn), and Hermann-Josef Röllicke (Düsseldorf).

Moreover, we are indebted to Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik (University of Vienna) and Axel Schneider (Leiden University) for establishing a monograph series to accompany the newly set up online journal *Historiography East and West* and accepting the proceedings of our conferences as its first issues.

With gratitude we acknowledge the enormous efforts made by Irmy Schweiger (Brunswick), Wolfgang Zeidl (Vienna), and Oliver Radtke (Heidelberg) who shouldered the arduous editorial work, and Ms. Caroline Mason (Durham), who, skillfully and with great care, saw to the correction and improvement of those papers written by colleagues whose mother tongue is not English. It goes without saying that all responsibility lies with the individual authors and the editors.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation of International Scholarly Exchange for their financial support, not only for the organization of the conference, but also for the editorial work, and to the Herzog August Bibliothek and the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut for further enhancements.
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