A propos de ...


Robert Gassmann's introductory course and his analysis of Ancient Chinese, "Antikchinesisch", abbreviated AC, consists of three closely related parts of increasing complexity: 1. *Antikchinesisch in fünf Elementargängen. Eine propädeutische Einführung* (Ancient Chinese in five elementary courses. A propaedeutical introduction); 2. *Antikchinesische Texte. Materialien für den Hochschulunterricht* (Ancient Chinese texts. Materials for university teaching); and 3. *Grundstrukturen der antikchinesischen Syntax. Eine erklärende Grammatik* (Basic structures of the syntax of Ancient Chinese. An explanatory grammar). This threefold approach to Ancient Chinese is unique in its well-structuredness and it provides the student of Chinese with a basic knowledge of the language of the Classical period. It is the first introduction to Classical Chinese based consistently on a linguistic theory. The first part, the *elementary course*, consists of a system of correspondences comprising just 150 different characters and thus avoids the difficulty of a loss of motivation for the beginner by having to learn too many characters at once, which according to the author is a great disadvantage of most introductions to Classical
Chinese. Each elementary course is devoted to one grammatical subject starting with the nominal sentence, followed by the noun phrase, the verbal sentence, subordinate clauses and texts. Each element consists of examples, graphical representations, theoretical explanations and exercises to practise the characters learned and the grammatical features. With this approach the author wants to provide the students with an at least basic active command of the Classical Chinese language. In these elementary courses the basic linguistic terminology applied by the author is introduced, particularly his differentiation of the two different levels of deep structure and surface structure, the case system he assumes for Ancient Chinese and the term valency which is one of the central grammatical features in his description of the grammar of Ancient Chinese – the theoretical system he develops is explained in the Grundstrukturen, the theoretical part of his introduction material. The author establishes a threefold system of variables modifying the predicate consisting of adverbs and adverbial phrases, the arguments of the verb with their thematic roles and variables modifying the whole sentence. All verbs are classified according to the number of arguments they take in the quoted texts and consequently in the lexicon added to the part "Ancient Chinese text" the valency of the verb is always indicated and taken into account in the translation of the verb. In the fourth element, different kinds of subordinate clauses are described and in the fifth element, "texts", the author provides some basic rules for complex structures in Ancient Chinese such as conditional, consecutive, causal, and final sentences and as an example for a complex and coherent textual structure a short passage from the Zuo zhuan, a genuine Ancient Chinese text, is presented together with a transcription in Pinyin and a translation. The annex of the "Elementary courses" consists of a key to the exercises, two graphics with the system of corres-pondences, the stroke orders and an index of key words. This elementary course provides the student with a basic knowledge of the grammar of Ancient Chinese according to the grammatical system developed by the author and at