

Foreword – “cum apologia”

The fate of this volume of collected articles needs a slight variant of the usual “habent sua fata libelli”: “habent sua fata auctores libelli”. The focus on the authors’ fate becomes obvious when the reader looks back at the event where the papers collected in this volume were originally presented. This was an international workshop on Chinese religions organized by Prof. Dr. Otto Ladstätter (†2005) at the Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia (IKGA) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Sadly, Prof. Ladstätter passed away before work on this volume could be finished. Incidentally, one of the authors, Prof. Dr. Erich Zürcher (†2008), followed him a few years later. The loss of the project’s “father” put the task of publication on the probably most inadequate shoulders imaginable. After Professor Ladstätter’s untimely death, I simply happened to be the only contributor available in Vienna to continue the editorial task. Consequently, Prof. Dr. Ernst Steinkellner, then Director of the IKGA, asked me to continue Professor Ladstätter’s project as a single editor. While the work on the volume first ran smoothly, not least thanks to the editorial assistance of Mrs. Cynthia Peck-Kubaczek from the IKGA, my move from Vienna to Cardiff caused considerable delays. In addition, the IKGA was relocated and restructured twice during the same time, while Mrs. Peck-Kubaczek left the IKGA without finishing her editorial work. I had already given up hope that the volume could be published at all, when Dr. Bernhard Scheid, japanologist at the IKGA, contacted me and offered his assistance. It is therefore due to his efforts that the last obstacles in the complicated production process of this volume could be solved in the end. We had to make a principal decision whether to fully update the contributions or to edit and publish them in the form they had reached up to the last major revision by Mrs. Peck-Kubaczek. In order not to postpone the publication of the edition any longer and considering the inconvenience and – in the case of Professor Zürcher’s essay – impossibility for a fundamental revision by the authors, we decided to publish all contributions as they were. I have only updated the “Introduction” with the most important recent publications in the field of Chinese religions,

while Bernhard Scheid brought footnotes and references into a single format and took care of the layout and the index. I still hope that the essays collected in this volume will be of interest especially since they cover such a wide range of Chinese religions, including contributions on the so-called Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which are normally either restricted to very specialised contexts or treated separately from the standard set of the “Three Teachings” (*san-jiao* 三教) – Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism – attributed to the Middle Kingdom. With this in mind I do not expect to have gained much merit (*punya* or *gongde* 功德 in the Buddhist sense) by this belated publication, but at least have repaid a small amount of my “Bringschuld” for the support and friendship I have received during my time in Vienna and afterwards from the directors, Professor Steinkellner and his successor, the late Dr. Helmut Krasser († 2014), and other members of the IKGA.

Cardiff, 24th March 2014

Max Deeg