

Gerhard Schmitt (29.IX.1933 – 26.XI.2017)¹

Slowly, but unrelentingly, the generation of those unusual Western sinologists who spent their childhood in pre-1949 Republican China is fading away. Gerhard Schmitt, who passed away on November 26, 2017 in Berlin after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease in the wake of an emergency ileus operation, was born in Canton on September 29, 1933. His parents Friedrich and Albertine were missionaries, who seem to have fit the cliché of those “Chinadeutsche” who failed to develop any deeper relationship with the country and its inhabitants – a commonly encountered colonial syndrome recently diagnosed again with lavish materials in Barbara Schmitt-Englert's *Deutsche in China 1920-1950. Alltagsleben und Veränderungen*² for the expat communities of Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin. Schmitt learned Cantonese from his *ayi* and otherwise attended the “Deutsche Oberschule” in Canton after 1939. Much against the will of his father he exchanged marbles for his first Chinese characters with his Chinese playmates and used his pocket money to “bribe” the nanny to teach him Written and Classical Chinese as well. Equipped with a phenomenal memory, he already managed to memorize large parts of the classics in his teens. After repatriation to Germany in 1947 – in the limbo after the end of World War II in Europe and before the founding of the People's Republic – he continued his education attending West German schools in Korntal (Baden-Württemberg), Düsseldorf and Berlin-Steglitz. Being strongly opposed to his parents religious beliefs and increasingly drawn towards socialism, he decided to leave them for good at the age of 18 and obtained his leaving school certificate at the Aufbauschule Neu-Lichtenberg in East Berlin. At a time when many East German intellectuals were heading West, Schmitt thus migrated in the other direction, opting for an “Übersiedlung in den Demokratischen Sektor”, as his dissertation CV laconically states.

At Humboldt University he read Sinology and Japanology and was assigned as “Aspirant” to the Linguistics Institute of the GDR Academy of Sciences after graduation in the fall of 1955. Somewhat cryptically, the CV appended to his unpublished Dr. phil. dissertation states: “After a long period of hesitation, conditioned by external difficulties, and encouraged by Professor Steinitz, I finally chose linguistics, a specialization originally quite removed from my range of interests.” With his supervisor, Wolfgang Steinitz (1905–1967), the doyen of Finno-Ugric studies in East Germany, he shared a number of formative experiences and convictions. Like Schmitt, Steinitz had rebelled against his bourgeois and religious family background and joined the Communist

1 The author wishes to thank Ulrich Lau (Berlin), Andrej Keiper (Rantrum), David Pankenier (Bethlehem, PA), Edward L. Shaughnessy (Chicago) and Dennis Schilling (Taipei) for important additions and corrections to an earlier draft of this obituary.

2 Großgossen: Ostasien Verlag, 2012.

Party before graduation from Gymnasium, doing a lot of political work for the Komintern and the Federation for the Protection of German Writers (Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller) during his Swedish exile. He later became not only a towering figure in post-war structural linguistics and a pioneer of the folk revival movement in both Germanys.³ Among many other tasks, he was also responsible for the establishment of the Sinology Section at the GDR Academy of Sciences and the initiation of the long-term *Chinese-German Dictionary* project eventually finished in 1985, to which Schmitt occasionally contributed⁴.

Schmitt's real interests, however, clearly lay elsewhere, in the dim and distant past of Early China. While he acknowledged some input from his second thesis supervisor Professor Martin Ramming (1889-1988), a Balto-German Japanologist who had served as the “Most Senior Dragoman” of the Russian Embassy in Tōkyō between 1916 and 1925 and became head of the East Asia Institute of the GDR Academy between 1947 and 1961, Schmitt was mostly self-trained as a linguist of Old Chinese. He thoroughly familiarized himself with system of the *Grammata Serica* (and, eventually, *recensa*) but also incorporated many novel ideas of Karlgren's early critics into his own reconstructions. He especially appreciated the work of Lu Zhiwei 陸志韋 (1894–1979), who he knew from a brief study period at the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing in 1958 and whose *Guyin shuolüe* 古音說略 [Précis of Old Chinese Phonology] – written during imprisonment under the Japanese occupation in 1940–1941 but published only in 1947⁵ – he held in high esteem for the rest of his life.⁶ Proceeding from Lu's phonological “interchangeability” (*tongzhuān* 通轉) rules between the uvulars, alveolars and labials of certain homophonophoric (*xiēshēng* 諧聲) series, and picking up the

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- 3 On Steinitz, see Utz Maas, *Verfolgung und Auswanderung deutschsprachiger Sprachforscher 1933-1945* [Prosecution and migration of German speaking linguists 1933–1944] (online ed.), <https://esf.uni-osnabrueck.de/index.php/katalog-m-z/s/451-steinitz-wolfgang> (last acc. 2017-11-30) with rich further references.
- 4 Helga Beutel, Horst-Dieter Gasde et al. [Autorenkollektiv des Zentralinstituts für Sprachwissenschaften], *Chinesisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch/Han-De cidian* 汉德词典, 2 vols., Berlin: Akademie-Verlag. On the background of the dictionary project, see Gunnar Richter, “Die Entwicklung der sinologischen Sprachwissenschaft an der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaft und das *Chinesisch-Deutsche Wörterbuch*” [The development of sinological linguistics at the Berlin Academy of Sciences and the *Chinese-German Dictionary*], in: H. Martin & C. Hammer (eds.), *Chinawissenschaften – Deutschsprachige Entwicklungen: Geschichte, Personen, Perspektiven*, Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde 1999, 344–367.
- 5 Lu Zhiwei 陸志韋, *Guyin shuolüe* 古音說略, Beijing: Hafo Yanjing Xueshe 哈佛燕京學社, 1947. A recent critique of his findings is available in Guo Weichen 郭偉宸, “Lin Yutang gu fangyin yunzhuan yanjiu tanxi – jian lun ‘bihua yundong’ shijiao xia de guyin gouni” 林语堂古方音韵转研究探析——兼论 ‘鼻化运动’ 视角下的古音构拟 [An exploration of Lin Yutang's studies of rhyme transfer in ancient dialect pronunciations, including a discussion on the reconstruction of Old Chinese from the perspective of the ‘nasalization movement’], *Guangdong Jishu Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* 广东技术师范学院学报 (2015) 9: 33–40.
- 6 On Lu Zhiwei, see Xiang Wenhui 项文惠, *Guangbo zhi shi: Lu Zhiwei zhuan* 广博之师:陆志伟传 [A master of wide erudition: Biography of Lu Zhiwei], Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanshe 杭州出版社, 2004; M. Münnig, “Lu Zhiwei”, in: R.P.E. Sybesma, W. Behr, Z. Handel et al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 2016, vol. II: 653–658.

thread from where Karlgren's work on dialect rhyming⁷, Lin Yutang's 林語堂 (1895–1976) Leipzig dissertation on Archaic Chinese dialectology⁸ and Dong Tonghe's 董同龢 (1911–1963) critique of Karlgren⁹ had left it, the topic Schmitt selected for his dissertation was *Zu einigen Problemen der Phonologie des archaischen Chinesisch. Der archaische Süddialekt und die Reimklasse yü 魚* [On several problems of Archaic Chinese phonology. The archaic Southern Dialect and the rhyme class *yu* 魚] [1].¹⁰ Half a century later, the phonology of Early Chinese dialects¹¹, especially of the so-called “Chu 楚 dialect” has become a field in its own right¹², a development largely driven by the flurry of excavated bamboo strip manuscripts from Chu during the last decades and routinely (though by no means undisputedly¹³) assumed to represent an Old Southern Chinese dialect of the area. At the time of Schmitt's dissertation, however, it was still highly unusual to approach such problems of Old Chinese phonology in the spirit of Wang Guowei's 王國維 (1877–1927) ‘method of double proof’ (*erchong zhengju fa* 二重證據法), i.e. by demanding inscriptional evidence for phenomena previously studied on the basis of transmitted literature alone. During the 1950s and the 1960s, the most important excavated documents to be cited in such contexts were still bronze inscriptions rather than bamboo manuscripts. Schmitt consistently refers to the pertinent paleographical studies by scholars such as Guo Moruo 郭沫若

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- 7 Especially his “The Poetical Parts in Lao-Tsi”, *Göteborgs Högscolas Årsskrift* 38 (1932) 3: 1–45.
- 8 Lin Yü-t'ang, *Altchinesische Lautlehre* [Phonology of Old Chinese], Dr. phil. Diss., Universität Leipzig 1923, typescript 112 pp. + handwritten appendices; written under the supervision of August Conrady (1864–1924).
- 9 Dong Tonghe [Tung T'ung-ho], “Yu Gao Benhan xiansheng shangque “Ziyou yayun” shuo, jianlun shanggu Chu fangyan tese 與高本漢先生商榷 “自由押韻”說—兼論上古楚方言特色” [In response to Mr. Bernhard Karlgren's theory of “free rhyming”: a discussion of the characteristics of the Archaic Chū dialect], *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* 7 (1940) 3: 533–543.
- 10 Defended at the Philosophical Faculty of Humboldt University on 4 July 1962; typescript xxi & 125 pp. The two referees were the mongolist and sinologist Paul Ratchnevsky (1891–1999) and the linguist and cyberneticist Georg F. Meier (1919–1929).
- 11 Cf., e.g., Hua Xuecheng 華學誠, *Zhou-Qin-Han-Jin fangyan yanjiu shi* 周秦漢晉方言研究史 [A history of Zhou, Qin, Han and Jin dialect studies], Shanghai shi shehui kexue boshi wenku 上海市社會科學博士文庫, Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe 復旦大學出版社, 2003 for an overview.
- 12 Competing introductions are offered by Zhao Tong 趙彤, *Zhanguo Chu fangyan yinxi* 戰國楚方言音系 [The phonological system of the Warring States Chu dialect], Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe 中國戲劇出版社, 2006 and Xie Rong'e 謝榮娥, “Shanggu Chuyu yanjiu shuping” 上古楚語研究述評 [A review of studies in the Archaic Chu dialect], *Changjiang Daxue Xuebao* 長江大學學報 4 (2005): 10–13.
- 13 For recent critical reviews see Haeree Park, “Ancient Chū 楚 language”, in: R.P.E. Sybesma, W. Behr, Z. Handel et al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 2016, vol. I: 144–155; Hu Haiqiong 胡海瓊, “Cong chutu wenxian kan shanggu Chuyu de xingzhi” 從出土文獻看上古楚語的性質 [A look at the character of the Chu language from the perspective of excavated manuscripts], *Xueshu Yuandi* 學術園地 (2012) 8: 16–17; Ye Yuying 葉玉英, “Lun Zhanguo shiqi yanyu yisheng yu Chuxi jianbo zhong de wenzi yixie – jian lun Zhanguo Chu fangyan de xingzhi” 論戰國時期言語異聲與楚系簡帛中的文字異寫——兼論戰國楚方言的性質 [A discussion of the linguistic differences during the Warring States period and differences in writing in the Chu script system – also on the character of the Warring States Chu dialect], paper presented at the “International Conference on the Integration of Old Chinese Phonology and Paleography”, Hong Kong Baptist University Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology, 2017.7.15-17, 28 pp. [forthcoming].

(1892–1978), Rong Geng 容庚 (1894–1983), Tang Lan 唐蘭 (1901–1971) and Yu Xingwu 于省吾 (1896–1984), and especially to the studies of rhyming bronze inscriptions compiled by Wang Guowei and Guo Moruo in the footsteps of Jiang Yougao’s 江有誥 (d. 1851) *yundou* 韻讀 ‘rhyme phrase’ studies of the first half of the 19th century.¹⁴ He was also thoroughly familiar with the work on ancient dialectology by Father Paul L.-M. Serruys (1912–1999), whose monograph on Yang Xiong’s 揚雄 (ca. 53 BCE – 18 CE) *Fangyan* 方言 [Regional expressions] he seems to have read during his three months’ study period with Jaroslav Průšek (1906–1980) in Prague in 1956, and the wider background of Flemish approaches to Chinese dialect geography, best represented in the work of the Reverend Willem A. Grootaers (1911-1999).¹⁵ Other early work on ancient Chinese dialectology like that of Eduard Erkes (1891-1958)¹⁶ or Janusz Chmielewski (1916–1998)¹⁷ is politely dismissed in his dissertation, while the important Japanese studies by Matake Naoshi 眞武直¹⁸ (1906–?) were probably unavailable in East Berlin.

Looking at the behavior of one single Old Chinese rhyme class, Schmitt’s dissertation was to all appearances the first detailed work on ‘slant rhymes’ (*heyun* 合韻; a term created by Duan Yucai 段玉裁, 1735–1815) as evidence for early dialects produced outside China, and, *a fortiori*, a sophisticated discussion of what constitutes a normative ‘refined language’ (*yayan* 雅言) in Early China. The work is a systematic study of the phenomenon in the early poetic anthologies and it was methodologically innovative in many ways. Thus, Schmitt looked extensively at rhymed passages embedded into

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- 14 I.e., *Chuci yundou* 楚辭韻讀 [The rhyme phrases of the *Songs of Chu*], *Qunjing yundou* 羣經韻讀 [Rhyme phrases in the classics], *Xian-Qin yundou* [Pre-imperial rhyme phrases], *Shijing yundou* 詩經韻讀 [The rhyme phrases in the Book of Odes], *Han-Wei yundou* 漢魏韻讀 etc., written between 1814 and 1831, and later mostly incorporated into the *Jiangshi yinxue shi shu* 江氏音學十書 [Mr. Jiang’s ten books on phonetics] (11*j*); first modern reprint Shanghai: Zhongguo shudian 中國書店, 1928, including a biography of Jiang by Wang Guowei.
- 15 Sawaki Motoei 沢木幹栄, “Shin nihongo gakusha retsuden – Grootaers” 新日本語学者列伝グローターズ [Biographies in Japanese Linguistics – Grootaers], *Nihongogaku* 日本語学 20 (2011) 13: 74-84; Inoue Fumio 井上 史雄, “First dialectologists: Willem A. Grootaers (1911-1999)”, *Dialectologia* 7 (2011): 167-174 and “Works in Dialectology by Reverend Willem A. Grootaers” (2014), http://innowayf.net/download/Works_in_Dialectology_by_Reverend_Grootaers.pdf (last acc. 30 November 2017).
- 16 Eduard Erkes, “Die Sprache des alten Ch’u” [The language of Old Chu], *T’oung Pao* 27 (1930): 1–11.
- 17 Janusz Chmielewski, “O niektórych językowych i językoznawczych aspektach najstarszych warstw ‘Cz’u-ts’y’” [On some aspects of language and linguistics in the oldest layers of the *Chuci*], *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 20 (1956): 37–81.
- 18 Matake Naoshi 眞武直, “Ryō-Shū kimbunkei jōkoin no bumbu” 兩周金文系上古韻の分部 [The distribution of archaic rhyme classes in the system of bronze inscriptions of the two Zhou dynasties], *Kyūshū Chūgoku Gakkaihō* 九州中國學學會報 5: 65-86; cf. also his later “Ryō-Shū Shin Kan imibun no yōin kara mita Ka’ōn to So’ōn” 兩周秦漢韻文の用韻からみた夏音と楚音 [Xia and Chu pronunciation from the perspective of the use of rhymes in rhymed texts from the two Zhou, Qin and Han periods], in: *Mekata Masashi hakushi kanreki kinnen rombunshu* 目加田誠博士還暦記念論文集, Tōkyō 東京 : Taian 大安, 1964, 375-402.

the argumentative prose of the master's texts¹⁹, and he tried to verify his proposed rhyme class mergers, shifts and splits on the basis of “dimidiated” rhyming compounds, early paronomastic glosses (*shengxun* 聲訓) and the occasional incorporation of loanword data. It also contains some bold proposals, well worth pursuing further even today, like the idea that some of the phenomena commonly analyzed as dialect features are perhaps better construed as linguistic varieties attached to the philosophical “schools”: “Die Taoisten sprachen, gleichgültig wo sie wohnten, überall das gleiche Idiom ...” [No matter where the Daoists dwelt, they all spoke the same idiom] (p. 69). Or it proposed to collect and study the creation of dialect characters in ancient texts, like the *hapax legomenon* 繫 *qìng* ‘joint (of sinews, flesh)’ in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (3.2) – a desideratum still not fulfilled today. On the other hand, although arguments from statistics are sometimes used, Schmitt doesn't follow his idol Lu Zhiwei in applying (then) advanced techniques such as x^2 (chi-square) tests to assess rhyme class stabilities – a method Lu had taken over from his training in psychology in the US during the 1910s.

Still, the dissertation was a pioneering, trailblazing effort, well ahead of the development of ancient dialect linguistics in China and elsewhere, and it is a pity that only a handful of scholars (such as Father Serruys²⁰) ever were able to read it. It was also somewhat hermetic in its presentation. Throughout his dissertation and increasingly in many of his later works, Schmitt had a propensity to combine cryptic numerical citation schemes with a dry, often downright cumbersome style and to sparkle even his non-linguistic arguments with a heavy dose of asterisked forms, arcane variant readings and archaising German translations.

That he could also strike a somewhat different linguistic key is shown by his German translation, of the entire *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 [Unofficial History of the World of the Literati], co-authored with Yang Enlin 楊恩林 during his dissertation period. First published by Kiepenheuer in Weimar in 1962, the 1201 pages of the original GDR edition were republished in the year of German reunification in Munich (C.H. Beck) after a thorough stylistic revision by Noa Kiepenheuer and Friedrich Mickwitz, and complemented by comments and an interesting postface by Eva Müller and Ralf Moritz. More recently (2015), they have reappeared again in a three volume bilingual Chinese-German edition with the Foreign Language Press in Beijing [16].

Already the next two academic papers show Schmitt closer to the interests apparently subdued during the dissertation phase. Both deal with themes which would occupy

19 His study of these rhymes was somewhat less comprehensive, but phonologically at least as sophisticated as the corpus collected, *bu mou er he* 不謀而合, at the same time by Long Yuchun in Hong Kong, which appeared in the following year: Long Yuchun 龍宇純, “Xian-Qin sanwen zhong de yunwen” 先秦散文中的韻文 [The rhymed passages in pre-imperial argumentative prose], *Chongji Xuebao* 崇基學報 2 (1962) 2: 137-168, 137-169, 3 (1963) 1: 55-87; repr. in: *Sizhuxuan xiaoxue lunji* 絲竹軒小學論集 [Collected articles on lesser learning from the “Silk and Bamboo Curtain Carriage”], Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 2009, 102-283.

20 Private communication, 4 September 1998, Kessel-Lo, Belgium.

him for the rest of his life – the reconstruction of Old Chinese myth, ritual and religious history on the basis of an etymology driven textual philology, coupled with archaeological and ethnographic data; and the study of lexical contacts between Chinese and the Northeast Asian neighboring languages since antiquity.

“The wind as phoenix, totem and taboo” [2] of 1963 offers a reinterpretation of the disyllabic versions of 風 ‘wind’ (Old Chinese²¹ *prəm) as *feilian* 飛廉 (OC *Cə.pə[rj] +rem ‘master of the wind’ and of *biao* 飊~焱 (OC *pew) ‘whirlwind’ as *fuyao* 扶搖 (OC *m-[p](r)a+l[a]w). Against the widespread understanding of these disyllables as lento forms since the first discussion of these equations by Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) in connection with his theory of an indigenous origin of the *fanqie* 反切 spelling technique, Schmitt argues that the ‘dimidiation’ of the underlying monosyllables is by no means ludically or metrically conditioned, but the reflex of a conscious tabooing of “totemic” wind names use by the Shang 商 in the first years after the Zhou 周 conquest.

“Are Chinese *liuli* and *guoluo/kuoluo* really of foreign origin?” [3] of 1964 concludes that the two terms *liuli* 琉璃 (var. 瑠璃, 流離, OC *ru+r^(s)aj) ‘beryll, opaque glass’ and *guoluo* 郭洛 (*k^wak+(Cə.)r^{ak}), var. *kuoluo* 廓落 (*k^{wh}ak+kə.r^{ak}) ‘leather belt’ are – against Otto Maenchen-Helfen (1894–1964) *e tutti quanti* – in fact simple alliterating (*shuangsheng* 雙聲)/rhyming (*dieyun* 疊韻) type compounds, rather than pre-Buddhist Indo-European loanwords in OC. One can see a direct line leading from the dissertation’s rhyme compound tests for OC rhyme class shifts to the topics of these studies, but hidden, as they were, in the *Mitteilung des Seminars für Orientalische Studien*, nobody in the field reacted to these proposals.

Schmitt returned to historical linguistics as his primary focus once more in a contribution on archaic Chinese interjections [4] in 1964, already announced in the dissertation. Here he tries to show that many of the early OC prepositions are derived from interjections, which are in turn sometimes related to bird sound onomatopoeia. In his review of the volume, A.C. Graham (1919–1991) merely summarizes Schmitt’s ideas²², leaving out the “bird” part and politely refraining to point out that the sketched grammaticalization path for prepositions would be cross-linguistically highly unusual, to say the least.

Maybe the internationally most well-known contribution of Schmitt’s oeuvre is his book on the *Changes*. Published with the Berlin Akademie-Verlag in 1970 [5], the slim volume is an attempt to make sense of the rhymed, riddle-like hexagram and line statements in the *Zhouyi* 周易 and their mythological implications, by drawing upon the full array of early transmitted and inscriptional sources and on inspiration from the “wild” *Zhouyi* readings by Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899–1946). Readers interested in an interpretation of the complicated text before it became a key classic and was hi-

21 If not otherwise stated, Old Chinese *reconstructions and Middle Chinese *transcriptions follow the system of W.H.B. Baxter & L. Sagart, *Old Chinese: A new reconstruction*, Oxford: OUP, 2014.

22 *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 29 (1966) 2: 455-456.

jailed for all sorts of politico-philosophical, historical and numerological appropriations, will find here what Nylan and Sivin have rightfully called a study characterized by “philological rigor”.²³

During the early 1970s, he continued his interests in early Chinese paleography and archaeology, and greatly enjoyed a study period in Japan, where he was exceedingly pleased to learn from the leading Japanese authority in these fields in Kyōto, the “scholar’s scholar”²⁴ Hayashi Minao 林巳奈夫 (1925–2006). Otherwise, his interests seem to have shifted more and more towards the question of Chinese contacts with the Northern sphere, i.e. the broader “Altaic” group of speaking communities represented in Early and Medieval Chinese texts. Several articles from this period ([6], [7], [10], [11]) deal with etymologies of *nomina ethnica*, theonyms and mythological figures, until they finally reach out to the Korean peninsula and Japan [15] in 1985. His “Sino-Tocharica”, announced in the (1985) article (p. 183, n. 62) were unfortunately never finished. At the same time Schmitt was engaged in a long-term project of editing and identifying the Chinese Buddhist fragments of the Berlin Turfan collection in cooperation with Thomas Thilo and Inokuchi Taijun 井ノ口泰淳, volume 1 of which appeared in 1979 [13] and was widely reviewed.

Schmitt’s publications in *Altorientalische Forschungen* – the flagship journal of ancient studies in the former GDR – are probably the most seminal he produced. Uninterested in the then orthodox interpretations of Chinese history during the Late Neolithic and early bronze age in the PRC, it is in articles like “Meng 氓 as colonists” [9] of 1976 or the “The ‘Divine Weeder’” – his preferred translation for *Shennong* 神農 – “as the inventor of plant cultivation” of 1979 [10], that Schmitt really paves the way for new readings of Early Chinese social and economic history. Often proceeding from radical reinterpretations of a particular *Shijing* 詩經 ode or *Zuozhuan* 左傳 passage, and carefully scrutinizing their inscriptional resonances, he pursues many important themes well beyond the realm of textual philology. These concern, e.g., the rise of social mobility epitomized by the roaming ‘colonizers’ (*meng* 氓, *m^rriŋ) organized as ‘oath-taking’ (*meng* 盟, *mraŋ) allegiances in the late Chunqiu and early Zhanguo period; the restructuring of society and commodity relations through monetized economy and cross-border trade by the colonizers; the role of irrigation systems and the redesigned survival of the ‘well field’ (*jingtian* 井田) system for the rise of private property [14]; or the relationship between privatization and taxation policies after what would much later be called the “Late Western Zhou ritual reform” period. Many of these topics were also taken up in a more systematic fashion by students and later colleagues, e.g. in Ulrich Lau’s Humboldt University Habilitation (of 1988/89) on Western Zhou territorial distribution.²⁵ Even if the Marxist underpinnings of these studies are always palpable, e.g. when he talks about the “almost capitalist world

23 Michael Nylan & Nathan Sivin, “The First Neo-Confucianism: An Introduction to Yang Hsiung’s ‘Canon of Supreme Mystery’ (*T’ai hsüan ching*, c. 4 B.C.)”, in: Charles Le Blanc & Susan Blader (eds.), *Chinese ideas about nature and society: studies in honour of Derk Bodde*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 1987: 4.

24 Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Hayashi Minao, 1925–2006”, *Artibus Asiae* 65 (2005): 359–367, quote from p. 364.

view” (“nahezu kapitalistische Grundeinstellung”) of Hanfeizi 韓非子, his Marxism was certainly quite far removed from 1970s PRC Sino-Marxism, and, occasionally, even critical of the Honecker regime.

Although he grew to be more and more alienated from GDR politics, 1989 came as a big rupture in his otherwise fairly stable academic life. After the dissolution of the Chinese Section at the GDR Academy, he briefly taught at the China Research Unit at Berlin Technical University before moving first to Trier and later to Erlangen, where he occasionally had temporary lectureships at the Sinological Institute and worked in the Chinese library as well. Students who took classes with him in the 1990s describe him as a demanding, sometimes inspiring, sometimes confusing and erratic teacher. His boyhood stories from Guangzhou could have the charm of Martin Booth’s *Gweilo* “memoirs of a Hong Kong childhood”²⁶ a few kilometers across the border and he never failed to stun his audiences with his superb memory, for instance by citing any Tang poem from the *Tangshi sanbai shou* 唐诗三百首 by heart, which he had learned during long train and subway rides in Berlin during the 1960s and 1970s. But he could also intensely irritate people with the same skills, e.g. when he pedantically corrected the famous ‘misty’ (*menglong* 朦朧) poet Gu Cheng’s 顧城 (1956–1993) quotations from the *Zhuangzi* – another text Schmitt liked to quote from memory at length – during a well-attended reading of the poet in the Berlin *Literaturhaus* a year before Gu’s extended suicide in his New Zealand exile in 1993. It wasn’t always easy for his interlocutors, it seems, to get the sensitive connoisseur of Hölderlin and Möricke and aficionado of Schubert interpretations by Dietrich Fischer Dieskau (1925–2012) into the same picture as the stern and stubborn philologist he also was.

More and more submerged in his theory that crucial parts of the Early Chinese classics, especially the *Laozi* 老子 (cf. [19]) and the *Chuci* 楚辭, could only be understood on the basis of *man’yōgana* 万葉仮名-style “alloglottographic” interpretations via its pre-or para-Koreanic Fuyu 夫餘 (Puyǒ) substratum, he became increasingly drawn to mythological and religious themes and their reflection in Neolithic and early bronze age artefacts from Eastern China. Another favorite theme was the history of the settlement of Yayoi 弥生 Japan via the South of the Korean peninsula. Many of his manuscripts became cryptic, and almost impenetrable for those who did not have the chance to enjoy their explanation *viva voce*. Thus, his last two public lectures at the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies in Zurich in 2012 and 2014 were well attended, but left members of the audience either completely dumbfounded or perfectly thrilled. Some of his essays from this period have been collected by the indefatigable Hartmut Walravens (Berlin) under the title *Contributions to the Ancient History of East Asia* [17.a-d] and published in mimeograph form by the Prussian State Library in 2012.

25 *Quellenstudien zur Landvergabe und Bodenübertragung in der westlichen Zhou-Dynastie (1045?-771 v.u.Z.)* [Monumenta Serica Monograph Series; 41], Nettetal/St. Augustin: Steyler Verlag, 1999.

26 Martin Booth, *Gweilo. Memoirs of a Hong Kong childhood*, London: Bantam Press, 2004.

But many others remain unpublished. During close to 40 years at the GDR Academy and more sporadically in his Franconian “exile”, Schmitt produced copious philological notes on many ancient texts on an almost daily basis. Most of them are written in pencil on A5-pages of greyish scrap paper, which he collected in cardboard boxes. Some of the notes were clearly intended as the basis for a future dictionary and grammar of Classical Chinese, which never materialized; others are like an oddly anachronistic and stunningly sophisticated *shu* 疏 commentary on a text which interested him for a year or even decades. The many boxes on the *Chuci* are among the most systematic in his extensive philological estate, since they were probably intended as the basis for a Habilitation (“Dissertation B” in the GDR system), which he never submitted. Very few scholars have had a chance to look at these materials, but through the kind mediation of his long-term research assistant and dear friend Andrej Keiper (Rantrum), they were transferred to the Sinology Section of the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies at the University of Zurich in 2015, with the help of its librarian, Dr. Marc Winter. Recently moved to custom-made wooden filing boxes, the materials are now awaiting future digitization and those willing to raise the treasures buried in the massive unpublished work of the erudite and brilliantly eccentric scholar. *R.i.p!*

List of Gerhard Schmitt’s works

Books and articles

- [1] *Zu einigen Problemen der Phonologie des archaischen Chinesisch. Der archaische Süddialekt und die Reimklasse yü* 魚 [On several problems of Archaic Chinese phonology. The archaic Southern Dialect and the rhyme class *yu* 魚], 4 July 1962; xxi, 125 pp. (unpublished).
- [2] “Der Wind als Phönix. Totem und Tabu” [The wind as phoenix, totem, and taboo], *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 9 (1963) 2-3: 383–391.
- [3] “Sind chinesisch *Liuli* [琉璃] und *Guoluo* [郭洛]/ *Kuoluo* [廓落] denn wirklich fremden Ursprungs?” [Are Chinese *liuli* and *guoluo/kuoluo* really of foreign origin?], *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 10 (1964): 385-395.
- [4] “Zur Frage der Interjektion im archaischen Chinesisch” [On the question of interjections in Archaic Chinese], in: Paul v. Ratchnevsky (ed.), *Beiträge zum Problem des Wortes im Chinesischen II* [Ostasiatische Forschungen; 3], Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964, 81-108.
- [5] *Sprüche der "Wandlungen" auf ihrem geistesgeschichtlichen Hintergrund* [Sayings in the *Changes* and their backgrounds in the history of thought], Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1970, 193 pp.; Download at: <https://www.yjcn.nl/wp/downloads/?did=10>.
- [6] “Wo siedelten nachweislich Türkische Stämme im ersten Jahrhundert vor bzw. nach der Zeitenwende?” [Where did Turkic tribes demonstrably settle in the cen-

tury around the beginning of the Common era?], *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 24 (1971) 3: 337–358.

- [7] “Der früheste Beleg für türkisch *yog* ‘Totenfest’” [The earliest attestation of Turkic *yog* ‘festival for the dead’], *Annali dell’Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 32 (1972): 251–252.
- [8] “Shun als Phönix – ein Schlüssel zu Chinas Vorgeschichte” [Shun 舜 as phoenix – a key to China’s prehistory], *Altorientalische Forschungen* 1 (1974) : 309–340.
- [9] “Meng 氓 als ‘Kolonisten’ [Meng 氓 as colonists], *Altorientalische Forschungen* 4 (1976): 251–312.
- [10] “Sino-Altaica”, *Altorientalische Forschungen* 5 (1978): 175–186.
- [11] with Hans Mohring, “Qidan als ‘die Konföderierten’” [Qidan as ‘the confederates’], *Altorientalische Forschungen* 5 (1978): 171–174.
- [12] “Der ‘Göttliche Jäter’ als Erfinder des Pflanzenanbaues” [The ‘Divine Weeder’ as inventor of plant cultivation], *Abhandlungen und Berichte des Staatlichen Museums für Völkerkunde [Dresden]* 37 (1979): 139–168.
- [13] with Thomas Thilo, Taijun Inokuchi 井ノ口泰淳 (eds.), *Katalog chinesischer buddhistischer Textfragmente* [A catalogue of Buddhist text fragments], Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, Zentralinstitut für Alte Geschichte und Archäologie. [Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des alten Orients, Berliner Turfantexte; 6], 1975–1985.
- [14] “Irrigationssysteme größeren Umfangs in China vor der Qin-Zeit” [Irrigation systems in China before the Qin period], in: Joachim Hermann & Irmgard Sellnow (eds.): *Produktivkräfte und Gesellschaftsformationen in vorkapitalistischer Zeit* [Productive resources and societal formations in pre-capitalist times], Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982, 149–163.
- [15] “Sino-Japonica I”, *Altorientalische Forschungen* 12 (1985) 2: 319–361.

Translations

- [16] with Yang Enlin 楊恩林, Wu Djing-dsi [=Wu Jingzi 吴敬梓], *Der Weg zu den weissen Wolken; Geschichten aus dem Gelehrtenwald* [=Rulin waishi 儒林外史], Weimar: G. Kiepenheuer, 1962, 1201 pp.; stylistically revised by Noa Kiepenheuer & Friedrich Mickwitz, including a postface and comments by Eva Müller & Ralf Moritz, München: C.H. Beck, 1989; bilingual reedition, Beijing : Verlag für fremdsprachige Literatur, 3 vols., 2015.

Manuscripts

- [17] *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte Ostasiens* [Contributions to the Ancient History of East Asia], Berlin: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin [including a short introduction by H. Walravens], Sonderheft 29, 2012; including:
- a. “Der goldene Stempel aus Shika 志賀 [The golden seal from Shika 志賀], 30 pp.
 - b. “Zu Idumö im Hinblick auf den Fundort des goldenen Siegels” [On Idumö with respect to the place of discovery of the golden seal], 25 pp.
 - c. “Youzhou 幽州 unter dem Gaogulier 高句驪人 Zhen 鎮 (+330 – +408) im Grab von Dexiongli 德興里 [Youzhou under the Gaogulian Zhen in the tomb of Dexiongli], 72 pp.
 - d. “Die Stele für den Haotaiwang 好太王: Gaogouli 高句驪 Gründung” [The stele for Haotaiwang: The founding of Gaogouli], 70 pp.
- [18] “Altchinas Geschichtsliteratur im Dienste der Erziehung” (conceived for an edited volume of the Central Institute for Ancient History of the GDR Academy, which failed to be published during the GDR turnaround of 1989).
- [19] “Theses on *Laozi*, the person and the work”, paper resented at the *8th International Conference on the History of Science in China – China and the West, TU Berlin, 24.-27.VIII.1998*, 5pp.
- [20] “Zu Christopher I. Beckwith, *Koguryo* (Leiden/Boston 2004)” [On Christopher I. Beckwith, *Koguryo*], handwritten ms., 13.9.2004, 10 pp.

(W. Behr, Zürich, 2.XII.2017)