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Foreword

In 2012 the Chinese Department of Humboldt-University staged a symposium inviting specialists to discuss theoretical and practical aspects of Feng Shui. The art of Feng Shui is not confined to houses but is also connected with landscape art. This fact becomes especially evident in traditional temple architecture and locations of Buddhist caves and statues that dot the scenery in Sichuan province and other locations.

Feng Shui is a practical reality that is rooted in Chinese life, merging the spiritual potential of human existence in life and death. Some analysis in the present volume shows the inseparable connection between the ancestors, the graveyards, and the housing for the ancestry at the home altars in residential quarters. It appears that the element of a religious connotation in building practice is a condition that characterizes genuine Feng Shui and must be considered by customers and architects. Some contributions show that comparable elements exist in European building practice, which seems to prove the impact of common notions about human habitation without being due to any intercultural stimulation.

We do have a welter of traditional documentation of Feng Shui that is connected with the official administration of literary culture. On the other side, there are calculatory crafts that since the 11th/12th centuries were formulated to rationalize Feng Shui. We took up again this phenomenon to scrutinize it from different angles. The calculatory definitions do possibly not always suit the practical need of the day. It is fascinating to see then how Feng Shui specialists and customers can manipulate the system to suit the situation.

In this symposium we had again the pleasure to learn about Feng Shui in Japan which shows that our field of study reaches from Europe to Japan and other regions in Asia with Greater China in the centre of Feng Shui culture.

This volume intends to conserve insights that we gained in the course of the symposium. We present a wealth of drawings and photos to support and illustrate our findings, and so to spur new scholarly studies that should combine philological work in Chinese libraries with practical field work in cities and in the countryside, which we recommend as avenue for adequate research in our field of interest. Finally I wish to express all my thanks to friends and colleagues who contributed to this volume, and I especially thank my secretary Mrs. Elisabeth Schulze for getting the book ready for publication.

Florian C. Reiter
Chinese Department of Humboldt-University,
Berlin, May 22, 2013