

## FOCUS

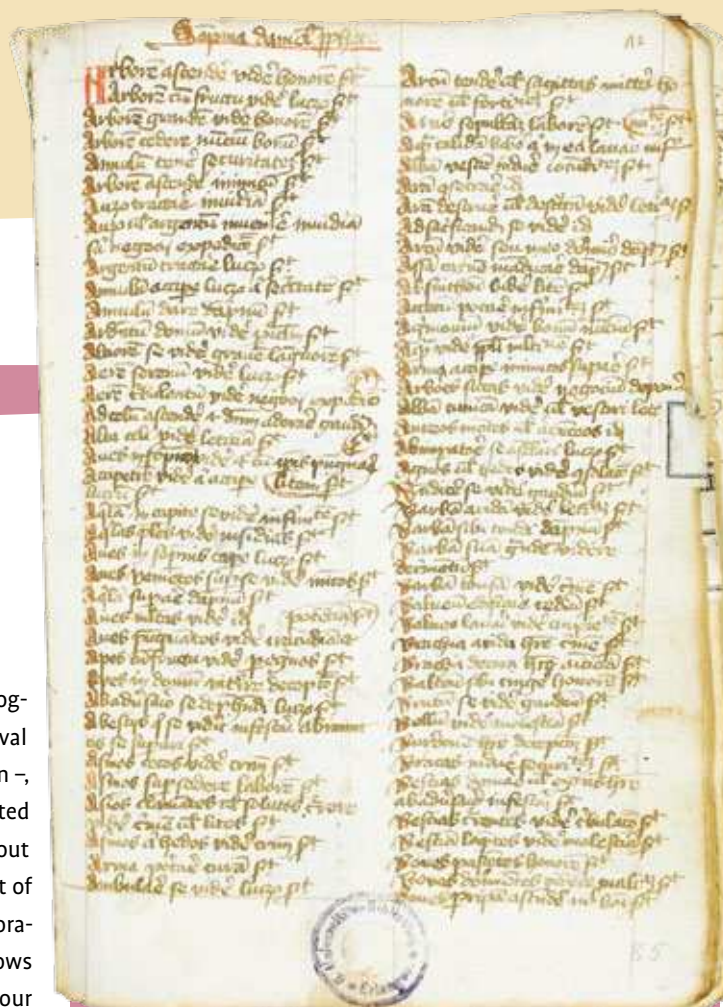
### Daniel and the Duke of Zhou – Dream Prognostics Books in the Chinese and European Middle Ages

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Having worked and published on dream divination and dream prognostics books before – László Sándor Chardonens in the early medieval Western tradition and Dimitri Drettas in the medieval Chinese tradition –, we met at the Consortium in March 2010. While we are both committed to our own research projects, we soon entered into a discussion about dream prognostics books in East Asia and Western Europe. In the spirit of the IKGF's founding principles, which stress the importance of collaboration across the disciplines, our continuous dialogue has shown and shows us how we can learn from each other, if only to have a wider vision on our own respective fields. The following outlines the direction in which a comparative study of the dream prognostics books can take us.

The Chinese dream prognostics books found in Dunhuang date from the ninth to the eleventh century CE. They are characterized by a rigid structure: each entry associates a dream image with a prognostic, following the model “to see x in a dream (*mengjian* 夢見): prognostic y”, e.g. “to see a black dragon in a dream: great riches for the family (*mengjian heilong zhe jia dafu* 夢見黑龍者家大富, P3908, 9a.4)”. The value of the omen, auspicious (*ji* 吉) or inauspicious (*xiong* 凶) is occasionally indicated. The entries are always classified into thematic sections, typically starting with Heaven and Earth. The medieval Western equivalent of the Chinese dream prognostics books are the alphabetical dream books, one of several types of European dream divination, attested from the ninth century CE onwards. Alphabetical dream books interpret the significance of dream images, following the model: “to see/if you see x (in a dream), it means y” (*x videre/si videris x (in somnis) y significat*), e.g. “to see dragons, it means joy” (*dracones videre gaudium significat* (Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, MS 673, fol. 85v)). The value of the omen is apparent from the meaning. The entries are presented in alphabetical order, and the Latin order of the entries is usually maintained even in alphabetical dream books translated into the European vernaculars.

A first comparison reveals clearly identifiable similarities and differences. At a basic level, the syntax of the entries is similar: the dream image is presented, then its significance. Moreover, the formulation of the first part of the entry stresses the visual aspects of dreaming. Another similarity is that dream prognostics books often are attributed to historical or mythical authorities. Most of the titles preserved in the Dunhuang oneirocritical corpus are variations on *The Dream Interpretation of the Duke of Zhou* (*Zhougong jiemeng shu* 周公解夢書), while the Western alphabetical dream books are variants of the *Somniale Danielis*, attributed to the Old Testament Prophet



*Sompnia Danielis prophete*

in Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, MS 673, fol. 85r  
(with the permission of the Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Daniel (see image: *Sompnia Danielis prophete*). These similarities, however, are counterbalanced by equally crucial differences. For example, Chinese dream prognostics books associate dreams with the sense of sight, even those dreams where hearing is mentioned or implied (e.g. P3990 v°, col. 5-6: “to see the six domesticated animals talking with humans in a dream: greatly auspicious”), whereas other senses may substitute for sight in *Somniale Danielis*, particularly hearing (e.g. “to hear the sound of an organ means joys close by”). Furthermore, dream images may be similar in appearance, but may have different cultural reference points. The dream image of a dragon (*draco* or *long* 龍), for example, features in both traditions, but the animals are culturally dissimilar. Also, the contents of the dream prognostics books are arranged differently: thematic in the case of the Chinese sources, and alphabetical in the case of the Western sources. Obviously, we are dealing here with two comparable corpora of isolable texts, as shown by their easily identifiable formal characteristics, such as the minimal mantic unit of the single entry. This allows us to establish a common terminology, but we should at all times be aware of chronological, linguistic, lexical, structural, and conceptual asymmetries that ultimately turn similarities into differences.

# Fate, Freedom and Prognostication. Strategies for Coping with the Future in East Asia and Europe



A part of fragmentary scroll S.620 found in Dunhuang (Gansu, China), on which an oneirocritical text is inscribed.

The titles of thematic sections (27: "Birds", 28: "Turtles", 29: "Swine and Sheep") have all been emphasized by red lines. Several corrections and additions, also written in red ink, are visible.

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While necessary at the initial stage, the systematic listing of similarities and differences should not be a goal in itself, because it fails to shed light on the place, reception and function of dream prognostics books in their respective cultures and social settings. These extra-textual features define dream prognostics books in their cultural context, and discussing them gives depth to a comparative study. Situating written dream divination in its proper context can reflect fruitfully on the value of mantic literature, and by extension, its relationship to contemporaneous prognostication practices, or the lack thereof. In our experience, material philology informs us more fully of the function and usability of dream prognostics books. Our guiding principle, then, is to study the textual units not only within their conceptual and ideological environment, but also within their material setting, that is, the codicological unit that hosts the dream prognostics books and the other texts it may contain.

László Sándor Chardonnens has published on prognostication and dream divination: see his *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics, 900-1100: Study and Texts* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), and his contributions to the *Storehouses of Wholesome Learning* volumes in the *Mediaevalia Groningana New Series* (Paris, Leuven, Dudley: Peeters). A second book is in preparation, on the transmission of magical texts in late medieval England.

Dimitri Drettas has published on Chinese dream divination and dream theories: see "Oniromancie", in Marc Kalinowski (ed.), *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale*, Paris: BnF, 2003 (with Jean-Pierre Drège). His book, *Le rêve mis en ordre. Les traités oni-rologiques des Ming à l'épreuve des traditions divinatoire, médicale et religieuse du rêve en Chine*, is in preparation for publication by the Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises (Collège de France, Paris).

## LECTURE SERIES SS10

### Definition and Transmission of the Medieval Dream Book of Joseph, with a Focus on Texts in Franconian Collections

Dr. László Sándor Chardonnens

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This paper was devoted to three types of dream divination in the medieval West, with special attention to the so-called dream book of Joseph. Rather than having a central thesis, the paper revolved around what is available in local historical collections, mainly to show that one does not have to travel far to find dream divination in medieval manuscripts and early printed books in European libraries. Another reason is that the transmission of the dream book of Joseph in particular is largely sited in Southern Germany.

Western dream divination takes three forms, covering three areas: whether a dream will come true (dream lunaries), what the dream image means (alphabetical dream books),

## Lecture Series

Tuesday Evenings 6:15 - 7:45 p.m.

During the semester, the IKGF holds a lecture series at which the visiting fellows are given the opportunity to present results of their research and invited guests lecture on the topic of the consortium from the perspective of their respective expertise. In the following the presenters of the past summer semester 2010 summarize their contributions (Overview about lectures please see following page). The lectures of the current winter semester 2010/11 will be part of the next issue of "Fate" (Details please see p. 19).