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Introduction: New Contributions in Tang Poetry

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The Tang dynasty [618–907] was the height of ancient Chinese civilization in many areas. The late-Qing, early Republican era scholar Wang Guowei 王國維 [1877–1927] once stated, “Every dynasty has its own representative literary accomplishments.” And speaking more specifically: “Tang dynasty poetry ... has remained unmatched.”¹ Wang considered poetry to be the crowning jewel of Tang culture, and his opinion has been widely accepted. Since the beginning of the twenty first century, Chinese scholars have made great progress in the field of Tang poetry by building on the accomplishments of previous research and, more importantly, by expanding the field of research itself with new paradigms and new material.

The four research articles in this issue span the entire Tang period, and they approach Tang poetry from different perspectives: scholarly communication, academic history, the creation of “classics”, and cross-national research.

The first article looks at Tang poetry as part of a larger, interactive literary tradition among Tang era poets aiming to establish their own identity. Wu Huaidong's 吳懷東 “The Derivation of *Shi-shi* in Mid-to-Late Tang as a Scholarly Inheritance” uses Tang dynasty scholar Meng Qi's 孟啟 [fl. 875] work *Benshi Shi* 本事詩 [*Poetry of Capabilities*] as its starting point. *Benshi Shi* is a collection of anecdotes about contemporaneous Tang poets. In it, Meng Qi mentions Du Fu 杜甫 [712–770] several times, and the term *shi-shi* 詩史, meaning “poet-historian” or “poetic history”, is often attached to Du Fu and his poems. Wu Huaidong traces the origins and changing use of this term as it relates to Du Fu. Wu further researches this important literary description in the context of Tang dynasty politics and academics, demonstrating the complicated circumstances under which Du Fu's poetry became canonized.

1 Wang Guowei 王國維, Preface to *Song Yuan xiqu kao* 宋元戲曲考 [*Studies on Song and Yuan Opera*] (Beijing: Zhaohua chubanshe, 2018), 5.

Ding Fang's 丁放 article continues the theme of canonization with his "The Making of Classics: Li Bai and Du Fu's Poems in Anthologies of Tang Poetry between the Tang and the Ming Dynasties." Ding focuses on Li and Du, the two most famous Tang poets, looking at how the transmission of their poems was connected to their canonization. From the time that the two were still alive and creating poetry, through the next several centuries, their poems separately experienced changing levels of popularity until the end of the Ming dynasty [1368–1644] when their status as the two greatest poets of the Tang dynasty was established.

Zhang Bowei 張伯偉 turns his focus outside of China, examining the path Du Fu's poetry took before it became a part of the literary canon in all of East Asia. Zhang's article "The Canonization of Du Fu in the Context of East Asian Literature" goes on to use this specific example to discuss the larger issue of the reception history of Chinese literature in Japan and Korea. Zhang finally looks at certain national characteristics of these East Asian countries, how they play a role in the development of literature in general, and how understanding these characteristics can help with research on more modern topics in the new century.

Finally Liu Yi 劉一 compares similar style short poetry between China and Japan in her article "On the Shared Structure of the Early to High Tang *Gexing* and the Seven-character Short Poem with a Discussion of 'Kayō jūei' as a Japanese Seven-character Short Poem Sequence." She takes the seven-character short poem as the unit of comparison, searching out the poems that adhere to a certain set of characteristics from a large corpus of poetry and illuminating their characteristics and evolution in China and Japan respectively. Her use of comparative methods and new material successfully moves forward the field of both Tang poetry and cross-cultural literary comparison.