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TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES

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EAST ASIAN ART HISTORY



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

Wenji Returns to the Han

A Handscroll of the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234)
and Its Relevance to the Jurchen Cultural Identity



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Monday, 18 November, 2019, 6:15 pm

CATS, Voßstr. 2, Building 4010, R. 010.01.05

In the early 13th century, the Jurchen Jin (1115-1234) experienced enormous military pressure from the Mongols and its territory shrunk significantly, coincided with a gradual socio-cultural change that the Jurchen adopted growing Han-Chinese cultural traditions. What were the specifics of this change, in particular regarding artistic identities and cultural appreciation? What were the Jurchen attitudes towards such transformation? How did the mutual exchanges and influences take place between Chinese artistic practices and those of the Jurchen? This talk tackles these questions by focusing on a handscroll from around 1200 entitled *Wenji gui Han tu* 文姬歸漢圖 (*Wenji Returns to the Han*), which depicts the well-known story of Wenji. Although the original setting of the story was in the end of the Han (206 BCE–220 CE), the figures in the scroll were evidently portrayed in contemporary

Jurchen costume and hair style. As one of the few extant scrolls of the period, the Wenji scroll clearly illustrates the shifting balance between Jurchen and Han-Chinese cultures during the late Jin. Comparing the scroll with later paintings of the same contents, it aims to facilitate a better understanding of the Jurchen artistic expression and their particular cultural identity in the 12th and 13th centuries.

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is currently associate professor at School of Humanities, Hangzhou Normal University. He has received PhD (2013) in Chinese studies at University of Würzburg, followed by a post-doc project (2013-2015) at University of Hamburg. His research interests focus on the ethnographic and material culture in North and Northeast Asia, in particular Mongolia, Manchuria, and north China.