

most advanced and most competent representatives of the sinological field in all its varied and extensive branches, as well as in other domains of Oriental research. It would have been very tempting to summarize in a special chapter the Chinese method of transcribing Iranian and to discuss the phonology of Iranian in the light of Chinese contributions. Such an effort, however, appears to me premature at this moment: our knowledge of Sino-Iranian is in its infancy, and plenty of fresh evidence will come forward sooner or later from Turkistan manuscripts. There is no doubt that many hundreds of new Iranian terms of various dialects will be revived, and will considerably enrich our now scanty knowledge of the Iranian onomasticon and phonology. In view of the character of this publication, it was necessary to resort to a phonetic transcription of both ancient and modern Chinese on the same basis, as is now customary in all Oriental languages. The backwardness of Chinese research is illustrated by the fact that we slavishly adhere to a clumsy and antiquated system of romanization in which two and even three letters are wasted for the expression of a single sound. My system of transliteration will be easily grasped from the following comparative table.

OLD STYLE

*ng**ch**ch'**j**sh*

PHONETIC STYLE

*ñ**ç**ç'**ʒ* (while *j* serves to indicate the palatal*ʒ* sonant, written also *dʒ*).

Other slight deviations from the old style, for instance, in the vowels, are self-explanatory. For the sake of the numerous comparative series including a large number of diverse Oriental languages it has been my aim to standardize the transcription as far as possible, with the exception of Sanskrit, for which the commonly adopted method remains. The letter *x* in Oriental words is never intended for the combination *ks*, but for the spirant surd, sometimes written *kh*. In proper names where we are generally accustomed to *kh*, I have allowed the latter to pass, perhaps also in other cases. I do not believe in super-consistency in purely technical matters.

The linguistic phenomena, important as they may be, form merely a side-issue of this investigation. My main task is to trace the history of all objects of material culture, pre-eminently cultivated plants, drugs, products, minerals, metals, precious stones, and textiles, in their migration from Persia to China (Sino-Iranica), and others transmitted from China to Persia (Irano-Sinica). There are other groups of Sino-Iranica not included in this publication, particularly the animal world,