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## Preface

On behalf of the editing team it is my great pleasure to present the seventh volume of the *Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies* to our readers. This journal assembles articles outlining the results of current research with a particular focus on the work of emerging scholars. Once a year the editors invite contributions from staff members and the most distinguished recent graduates of the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Vienna, thus providing a platform to disseminate their findings to a broader academic audience. In addition, the editors welcome unsolicited submissions from international scholars. All papers are evaluated thoroughly by two anonymous reviewers before they are accepted for publication. The contributions share the same high standard as they are selected based on their methodological rigour, originality, and the authors' proficiency in the target language(s).

Volume 7 for the first time contains eight papers, which mirror the great diversity of disciplines, theoretical assumptions, methodological approaches and topics young scholars at the Department of East Asian Studies are dealing with. At the same time, their research activities highlight the complexity of the processes that take place in East Asian societies. In the first paper, Albert Allgaier deconstructs the proposition of Japan being a 'Robot Kingdom', analysing the academic discourse of Japan's alleged robotophilia in the context of *nihonron* (essentialist theories of 'Japaneseness'). Andrea Aumayr in the second paper expounds on international peace cooperation activities of Japan and the Republic of Korea in a comparative study; she gives an overview of the respective efforts and actions aiming at promoting regional and global peace between 2000 and 2010, looking for similarities and differences in the approaches towards international peace co-operation. In the third paper, Rainer Doppler discusses the relation between economic development and international trade on East Asian (China, Japan, South Korea) and Southeast Asian (Singapore and Thailand) economies. He critically interrogates the elsewhere stated hypothesis that the level of economic development has an impact on the degree of international trade in these Asian regions from a comparative perspective. Christine M. Havlíček in the fourth paper of this volume examines China's relationship with the peoples of the steppes as one example of innovation transfer during the Warring States Period (c. 500–221 BCE). She stresses the important role these relations played in the history of China, through the adoption of some key innovations from the steppes. In the fifth paper, Isabel Heger examines the meaning and functions of the concept of *yuánfèn* 缘分, a kind of subjectively perceived chance that brings people or people and events together, in contemporary China. She presents the results of a case study for which she conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 19 students from East China Normal University in Shanghai in 2012. The sixth paper by Arthur Müller compares the hunting licence systems of Japan and South Korea, aiming at

an assessment of their ecological, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability. Current laws on hunting, weapons, wildlife, and environmental protection as well as existing local hunting customs and the historic reasons for their disappearance are discussed in his study. Julia Renner in the seventh article of this volume examines oral corrective feedback strategies in regard to pronunciation errors in a Chinese foreign language classroom. She presents and discusses the results of a case study which she conducted at the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna, having observed, recorded, and evaluated two sessions of first year Chinese language laboratory classes. Finally, in the eighth paper, Mei Yang discusses the re-examination of Confucianism in contemporary China. Her paper stresses the importance of integration between harmony and liberalism.

The editors are indebted to a number of peers who lent their valuable expertise, critically reviewing the contributions and providing helpful and detailed comments. Their generous efforts greatly improved this volume. Special thanks go to the guest editors Chenyang Li (Nanyang Technological University), Sascha Klotzbücher (University of Vienna, Chinese Studies), and Eva Vetter (University of Vienna, Center for Teacher Education) for their insightful and keen observations. Julia Peitl was responsible for the formal editing and layout, a task she mastered skilfully and efficiently. We also thank Eleanor Ryan-Saha for the great effort she put into the language editing process. As ever, the kindness and professionalism of Michael Ritter of Praesens Verlag made the technical side of this publication pleasantly uncomplicated. This volume would not have been possible without the financial support of the Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies of the University of Vienna and of the Kulturabteilung der Stadt Wien. In this respect, gratitude is also owed to the East Asian Economy and Society team at the University of Vienna for securing and administering the required core funding.

Volume 8 (2016) is already under preparation. It is the editors' hope that this and future volumes of the *Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies* continue to be well received within the scholarly community and beyond.

Vienna, June 2015

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# The Meaning and Functions of the Concept of *Yuanfen* 缘分 in Contemporary China: A Qualitative Study with Students from East China Normal University

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## Abstract

*Yuánfèn can best be defined as a kind of subjectively perceived chance that brings people or people and events together. Being able to provide explanations in a positive way, Yuanfen has always functioned as an attribution, the psychological process of seeking reasons for particular events. The aim of this study was to investigate the meaning and functions of Yuanfen for university students in the PRC, which should give an insight into the meaning of the concept in a specific social context within contemporary China. The results were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 19 students from East China Normal University in Shanghai that were conducted in 2012. The data was analysed through qualitative content analysis. The findings show that if Yuanfen has individual meaning for Chinese students, attributing life events to the concept has very positive functions, leading to a positive perception of and a positive attitude towards different relationships, events, and situations. Yuanfen can therefore play a very positive role in Chinese student life, not only for the individual, but also for the social environment of university education in which the students are confronted with a range of structural and interpersonal challenges.*

**Keywords:** *Yuanfen* 缘分, cultural psychology, attribution, Chinese students



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