

BOOK REVIEW

World Philology. Edited by SHELDON POLLOCK, BENJAMIN A. ELMAN, AND KU-MING KEVIN CHANG. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015. Pp. x, 452. \$45.00. ISBN: 0674052862

World Philology carves its niche in the publishing scene as "the first book to examine" philology covering a "vast space and time" (1).¹ It embraces its expansive topic in fourteen chapters on Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Hellenistic, Latin, Ottoman, Persian, Sanskrit, Renaissance, and Japanese philology (listed here in alphabetical order). The foreword and introduction focus on nineteenth-century German philology, as do chapters 12 and 13. The intended audience is intellectual historians, although linguists, philologists, and general readers may also be interested in this book.²

Overall, *World Philology* collects valuable articles by renowned scholars. However, it should be noted that many of the contributions are "recycled" rather than written for the volume. Commendable pieces are those of (i) Franco Montanari, (ii) Beatrice Gruendler, (iii) Ku-ming Kevin Chang, (iv) Constanze Güttenke. These four articles highlight different aspects of the same theme; namely how philology (i) arrives at critical editions of texts, (ii) is interwoven with grammar, rhetoric, stylistics, and (iii) linguistics, and (iv) conveys an intriguing paradigm at the heart of modern university research. Further explanation of the interconnection between these topics in the introduction would have benefited the entire volume.

¹ See "Future Philology: The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009) 931–61 by S. Pollock, one of the editors of this volume.

² The volume has already been the subject of substantial reviews, see Vishwa Adluri's review in *American Historical Review* 121 (2016) 908-910; and Hui, Andrew. "Many Returns of Philology: A State of the Field Report," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 78 (2017) 137–156.

Pollock's introduction, moreover, does not so much as offer a clear definition of philology;³ the inclusion of this fundamental information would accommodate better the readers to understand the principal contributions of philology, and would explain how philologists can gain greater insights into texts than are achieved in other disciplines. It would have benefited the whole volume to have included an afterword as well, which pulled lines from the introduction and took into account every contribution, in order to point out what are the nodes and strands between different languages and cultures, even when some (such as Sanskrit) do not attest a term equivalent to philology. It is not helpful to assert in the opening lines that the volume "sketch[es] the broader history of philology in various world regions" (2) when it clearly, cannot be a global history of the subject, due to limitations of time and space. In spite of these claims, it does not handle the development of the phenomenon globally from an historical point of view, and neither does it analyse the philological methods of different languages and cultures.

The "recycling" of contributions and the lack of a proper introduction or an afterword to tie the arguments of the chapters together makes the framing of the volume problematic. One way to understand *World Philology* could be to consider it as a "unitary global field of knowledge" (22). However, several conference papers (for example, about Buddhist, Confucian, Sanskrit and Tibetan philology) were not included in the volume. As a result, the volume clearly reflects the European point of view, contradicting the introductory statement (23) that a philology of the twenty-first century must be focused on methodological and conceptual pluralism.

Another way to understand *World Philology* is as a programmatic work for setting the tone of philological studies in the future. However, rather than focus on the future of philology, the volume deals with the past, namely Friedrich August Wolf's invention of "the discipline of 'philology' in 1777" (16) and the unprecedented supremacy of philology in nineteenth-century Germany.

A third way to understand *World Philology* could be as a means of sharing new insights into philology from across the globe. However, it cannot be clearly framed in this way either, as several articles are the fruits of previous publi-

³ James Turner, for his part, provides clear definitions in his volume *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014. These may be condensed to the claim: Philology is the "inquiry into language and its products", as part of a nation's culture (386).

cations, and, while intercultural contact points can be extracted from each contribution and matched each other, one cannot sketch the overall idea of global philology.

Despite the problematic framing issues raised in this review, the volume achieves the goal of bringing together very different languages and cultures, promoting the revival of matter, and offering a wealth of ideas for future research. In the wake of its publication, we hope to see increased contributions on philology in the languages and the cultures which were not included. In particular, material engaging with ancient and oriental languages, such as Akkadian, Egyptian hieroglyphics, Sumerian, and Tibetan, would be fruitful.⁴

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⁴ Mesopotamian philology is mentioned only in the introduction as the place "where [philology] may in fact have begun" (Pollock et al. 2015, 24). The related footnote (number 39) mentions the volume by Eckart Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries*. Ugarit-Verlag: Münster, 2011. On textual criticism respectively in Sumerian and Akkadian, see Paul Delnero, *The Textual Criticism of Sumerian Literature*. American Schools of Oriental Research: Boston, 2012; and Martin Worthington, *Principles of Akkadian Textual Criticism*. De Gruyter: Berlin, 2012.