

Introduction

This book is a collection of articles over the years. The articles focus on the Chinese written monuments of the 1st—13th centuries, including such important and little-studied phenomenon in the Chinese tradition as author collections named *biji* (筆記). The emergence and development of such collections belong to the Tang period and the Song Empire was marked by the flourishing of the genre the distinct feature of which is an author's complete freedom in terms of both form and content. *Biji* represents a kind of notebooks made by Chinese and varied greatly in scopes and topics. Now, these monuments are invaluable and unique source of information on various aspects of material and spiritual culture of traditional China.

A number of other articles are devoted to the traditional prose named *xiaoshuo* (小說), collections of which were widespread in China since the 4th century and enjoyed great popularity. Typically, *xiaoshuo* are amazing records of wonder cases, descriptions of supernatural, magical events — or household sketches, witty dialogues, events that are associated with famous people of the time. *Xiaoshuo* is generally recognized to be significant source that can shed light on different aspects of the cultural life in traditional China, first of all — ideas of supernatural and extraordinary, the souls of the dead, magic animals, etc.

Unfortunately, nowadays *biji* and *xiaoshuo* of this period are studied very little in Europe, and the book is intended to close some gaps in this field of knowledge.