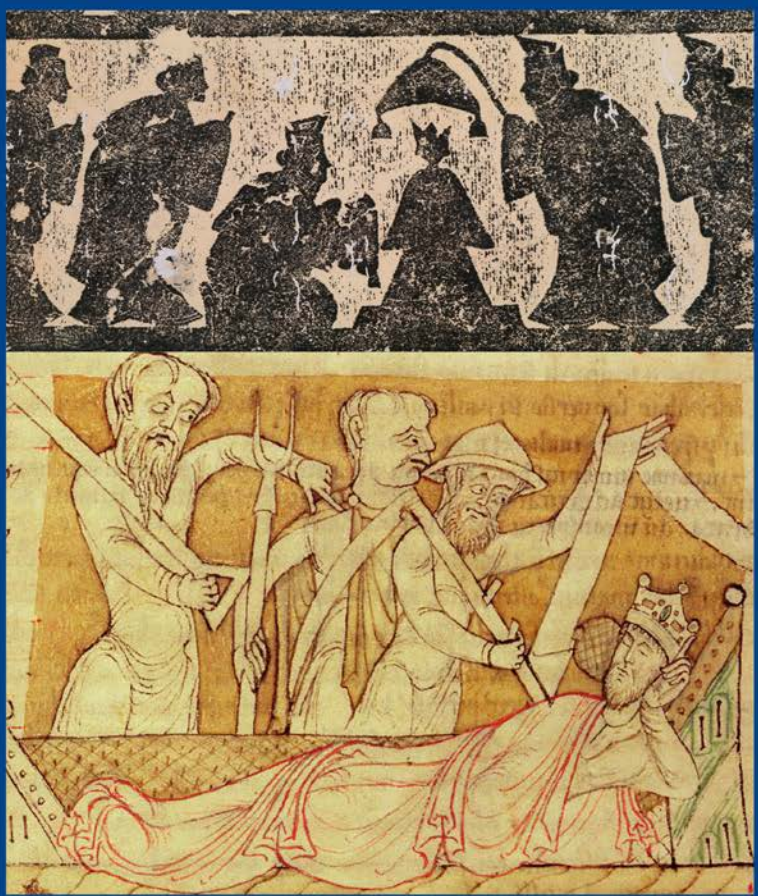
Karina Kellermann / Alheydis Plassmann / Christian Schwermann (eds.)

Criticising the Ruler in Pre-Modern Societies – Possibilities, Chances, and Methods

Bonn University Press



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Macht und Herrschaft

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Herausgegeben von

Matthias Becher, Elke Brüggen und Stephan Conermann

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With 26 figures

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Series Editors' Preface

Two socialisation phenomena lie at the heart of the Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) 1167 at the University of Bonn, '*Macht und Herrschaft,* Power and Domination. Premodern Configurations in a Transcultural Perspective'. We put *power* and *domination* under the microscope and interrogate them with the tools of comparative research. Both have impacted human coexistence at all times and worldwide; as such, they are primary objects of investigation for scholars in the humanities. Our multi-disciplinary research network aims to bundle the skills of the many participating fields in interdisciplinary cooperation, and to develop a transcultural approach to the understanding of power and domination.

Our pool of case studies from a wide variety of regions provides a fresh perspective on both similarities and differences. The essays published in this series reflect both our interdisciplinary approach and our transcultural perspective.

The Research Centre uses four thematic approaches to phenomena of power and domination; they also form the basis of the four individual project areas of CRC 1167: 'Conflict and Consensus', 'Personality and Transpersonality', 'Centre and Periphery' and 'Criticism and Idealisation'. All four have been at the centre of numerous international conferences and workshops that provide a basis for intellectual exchange with established scholars in Germany and further afield.

It would not have been possible to publish the fruits of these important exchanges within this series without the generous financial support from the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*) and the continuous commitment of the University of Bonn, which provided the necessary research infrastructure. We would like to express our sincere thanks to both.

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Criticising the Ruler – Possibilities, Chances, and Methods. Introduction

The SFB 'Macht und Herrschaft. Vormoderne Konfigurationen in transkultureller Perspektive' organised an international conference on 'Kritik am Herrscher – Criticising the Ruler', which took place from 12–14 April 2018 at the university of Bonn. After the initial conference organised by the SFB 'Macht und Herrschaft – transkulturelle Zugänge' in December 2016 and another conference on 'Die Macht der Herrschers – personale und transpersonale Aspekte' in November 2017, this was the third interdisciplinary conference, and it focused on possibilities, chances and methods of criticism in pre-modern societies.

The organisers of the conference and editors of this volume are indebted to many persons for their assistance. We would like to thank: the speakers, the chairs, the editor of the Macht und Herrschaft Monograph Series, Prof. Dr. Matthias Becher, the managing director of the SFB 1167, Dr. Katharina Gahbler, the University of Bonn and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for financing the printing of this volume. Our special thanks go to Felix Bohlen, Dominik Büschken, Paul Fahr, Christina Goßner, and Sophie Quander for their dedicated and reliable support during the conference and for their competent editorial assistance and to our proofreader Gwendolin Goldbloom for her unerring sense of English style. We also thank Sophie David Da Costa, Ellen Goebel, Anika Hornik, Sarah Mettelsiefen, Lea Wallraff and Tobias Wilke for their meticulous proofreading and for assisting us in the production of the index.

*

When looking at pre-modern monarchical societies, one does not expect to observe fundamental dissent, that is, criticism directed at the social order as such or at the political system. Having said that, it was possible for antimonarchical ideas and concepts with republican or democratic tendencies to be preserved in the archives of the cultural memory of a later monarchical era.[1] In such cases the

1 Cf. Jan ASSMANN, Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen, München 1992, 87–103.

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ideas of political philosophy or sacral texts criticising the constitution would be preserved as part of the nation's cultural heritage, until they grew politically explosive. At this point they would be updated in the discourse criticising the ruler and put pressure on the monarchical system. As a rule, however, criticism was limited to individual monarchs, their administrative performance and political decisions. While discontent and opposition could lead to insurrection and rebellion, which sometimes even resulted in the ruler's abdication or death, but normally only culminated in him being replaced by another monarchical figurehead, the subtler methods of voicing criticism were applied within a framework of legality, of a set of customs or of a code of "rules of the game" (*Spielregeln*) and intended to improve the performance of the incumbent or reform his conduct at court. The various forms of verbal or staged censure of rulers in pre-modern monarchical societies are the subject of this volume. Proceeding from the typology of "critique of forms of life" developed by the German social philosopher Rahel Jaeggi, one can subsume them under the concept of *internal criticism*, as opposed to *external criticism:*

> "How does an internal approach differ from external criticism? The most general explanation is that in these cases the standard of criticism is not located *outside* the state of affairs or object criticized but *within* the object itself. By contrast, external criticism proceeds by measuring an existing situation against claims that go beyond the principles inherent in it or by calling it into question as a whole. Thus, the different variants of external criticism apply to criteria that are brought to bear on the norms and practices of a given social formation from the outside. The claims in terms of which an existing situation is judged go beyond the principles that hold within it, or they do not share those principles."[2]

Accordingly, the strategy of internal criticism can be described as being based on the assumption "that, although certain ideals and norms belong to the self-understanding of a particular community, they are not actually realized within it, so that the reality of certain practices and institutions is measured against these ideals, which are already contained, but not realized, in the community in question."[3] Although this approach is conventionalist in terms of its conception of norms and conservative in terms of its structure – for instance, it does not aim at transforming the existing social order, but rather intends to make its conventional ideal into something real –[4], internal criticism of monarchical rule was both dangerous for the critic and at the same time practised more widely than is usually assumed. At some pre-modern courts, political dissent of this kind was

2 Rahel Jaeggi, Critique of Forms of Life, trans. by Ciaran Cronin, Cambridge, MA/London 2018, 177 (original German version: Kritik von Lebensformen [Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 1987], Berlin 2014).
3 Ibid., 179.
4 See ibid., 187.

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even institutionalized, for example within the framework of offices that were responsible for remonstrance.

Based on a broad variety of sources and cultures, this volume will study the possibilities, chances, and methods of criticising the monarch from a comparatist transcultural perspective. Even in societies where criticism was not part of political procedures or the rules of the political game, there might have been habits and ways of articulating dissent that can be uncovered in the documents. Comparing various cases of criticism in different monarchical societies and discussing them across the boundaries of the disciplines will sharpen the understanding of the conceptions, structures, functions and effects of criticism of *Macht* and *Herrschaft*. To achieve this goal, various forms of internal criticism of monarchical rule will be analysed with regard to the following eight fields of inquiry:

(1) **Addressees and senders:** The question of who is criticised and who voices the criticism sets the stage for judgement of the habits and customs of criticism. If the monarch himself is the target, the critic might choose the strategy of levelling his accusations against persons or groups who are in the vicinity of the ruler, using surrogates to voice his denigrations, while in other, often milder cases criticism can be directed at the ruler himself, articulated in the author's own voice.

(2) **Methods:** The method of criticism is dependent on the existence of a tradition of formulating and presenting dissent as well as on the literary and visual forms in which criticism is voiced. The possible restorative force of internal criticism is connected to, but not entirely conditioned by, the form the critic chooses.

(3) **Subjects, patterns and cultural substrates of judgement:** The most radical way of criticising a monarch is to allege that he is a tyrant, but criticism comes in many shades. The ruler can be accused of being addicted to vices, of having bad habits, of acting wrong in specific circumstances or of a single misstep. These subjects of internal criticism must be seen against the background of the above-mentioned conventional ideals of good rule that can be shaped by a society's religion or its traditional catalogue of virtues. Therefore, the critic's choice of subject provides insight into a society's conventional expectations with regard to monarchical rule – or at least into the expectations of the critics.

(4) **Audiences:** Reproaches levelled against the ruler can be voiced in public, for example at certain occasions like feasts, in front of influential persons, or they can be veiled by irony and intended for a very small audience. The choice of audience is influenced by the author's personal circumstances, but also by the receptiveness of the audience for criticism. Both are shaped by the conditions of monarchical rule within a given society.

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(5) **Aims:** The aims of criticism can have a very wide range, from a general renunciation of the commonly accepted order in the case of external criticism (which is not the subject of this volume) to the intention of correcting a minor misconduct of the ruler or simply to prevent similar mistakes in the future. Examining the aims of criticism provides insights into its transformative potential.
(6) **Theoretical frame and self-reflection:** It is important to determine whether the critics referred to a framework of theoretical ideas about criticism or whether they reflected their own activities and their political and social role. A notable degree of self-reflection on the side of the critic indicates an advancement towards the establishment of both a theory and a methodology of criticism.
(7) **Concepts and their history:** The question of self-reflection is closely connected with the analysis of key concepts used in criticism and the study of their history. Traditions of key concepts can be approached from historical, linguistic, and literary angles, and their analysis will shed light in turn on the procedure of criticism itself.
(8) **Orchestration and reception:** The question of how criticism is staged and received is intimately related to the investigation of its methods and audiences. Critics can present their reproaches in ways that are conducive to a fruitful reception of their counsel. Whether orchestration in front of a public audience or only in front of the ruler's confidants is more promising depends for the most part on society's acceptance of and familiarity with criticism as well as the social status of the critic.

As an introduction into the subject of our volume, three examples will have to suffice to illustrate what criticism might look like and what conclusions – amongst many others – can be drawn with regard to the above-mentioned eight fields of inquiry. In the chronicle of John of Worcester written about 1140, shortly after the death of Henry I, the king openly criticised in this tale, the writer describes the king's three dream visions, the importance of which is stressed by the fact that illustrations of these apparitions were made to lend additional authority to the tale in question[5]:

5 John of Worcester, Chronicon. The Annals from 1067 to 1140 with the Gloucester Interpolations and the Continuation to 1141, edd. Reginald R. Darlington/Patrick McGurk, 3 vols. (Oxford Medieval Texts), Oxford 1995–1998, vol. 3 1998, 198–203 (at 202f. on the almsgiving). The images are to be found in the Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS. 157, 382 (peasants and knights), 383 (bishops and Henry's ship). On this dream cf. also Matthew Strickland's contribution in this volume.

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"In the thirtieth year of his reign and his sixty-fourth year, a marvellous dream appeared in Normandy to Henry, king of England.
There were three visions, each different from the other. This was the first vision. Overcome by drowsiness, the king fell asleep, and behold, there was a big band of peasants standing by him with agricultural implements. In different ways they began to rage, to gnash their teeth, and to demand from him dues which I am unable to describe. Waking in terror from his sleep, he sprang from the bed, it may be with bare feet and seized his arms, wanting to punish those whom he had seen in his sleep. But he found no one. He saw this and saw that those who should watch by the side of kings had all fled. Such is the dignity of kings! The king dressed in the purple who inspires fear like a raging lion (as Solomon puts it) is terrified in his sleep by peasants. King, stop, stop chasing shadows, go back to bed, so that when asleep you will again see a greater vision." (Figure 1)

Fig. 1: John of Worcester, Chronicon, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 157, 382

The next time he goes to sleep, the king sees knights, "all apparently wanting to kill the king and to cut him into pieces if they could." (Figure 2) And the third time the king sees figures of archbishops, bishops, abbots, deans and priors holding their pastoral staffs: "… and with many threats they are seen to want to attack him with the tips of their staffs." (Figure 3)

This was no small proportion of the king's subjects. It was the whole community of the realm represented by the three orders wanting to address their grievances.

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Fig. 2: John of Worcester, Chronicon, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 157, 382

The king's reaction to this overall and fundamental criticism of his rule is rather bland and uninspired:

> "The king told [his doctor] all he had experienced in his sleep, and [he] explained their true interpretation and, as Nebuchadnezzar did on Daniel's advice, advised him to redeem his sins by alms-giving."

Now, it could be argued that for a medieval monarch alms-giving was always a good idea. But as the tale carries on, it becomes clear that this is not the solution, because shortly after his dream the king crossed the channel and found himself in distress at sea, a situation which is once again presented in an accompanying image (Figure 4). It is only then that John of Worcester addresses what he sees as the core of the problem:

> "Fearing an imminent disaster, the king decided that the Danish tax should not be collected in the English kingdom for seven years so that the King of kings would in his mercy be watchful and succour both him and his followers.
> On his return, to everyone's rejoicing he fulfilled his promise."

Now this could be just a historical example about the power of dreams and God's intervention in human affairs, but the real purpose of the story emerges only when John draws a connection to his present and Henry's successor King Stephen:

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Fig. 3: John of Worcester, Chronicon, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 157, 383

> "King Stephen who now reigns, also promised in a royal decree that he would never collect the Danish tax. We hear that it is now again demanded throughout England by a perjury odious to God."

This clearly expressed disapproval of King Stephen who did not continue with Henry's good practice of pausing the collection of the Danish tax.

When looking at this tale with the eight fields of inquiry in mind, one can highlight central subjects of this volume:

Addressees and senders: On the surface the addressee is King Henry, and the critics are just the phantasmas of his own imagination, but these are only stand-ins for the current king on the one hand and the community of the realm on the other. The author of the chronicle acts as a spokesman and voices the grievances of the subjects. Whether he does so because he feels an obligation to his community or from a more abstract perspective of responsibility is difficult to determine. The criticism has not official legitimation except the idea, universally held at the time, that clerics were allowed to correct members of their flock, even including the king himself.

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Fig. 4: John of Worcester, Chronicon, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 157, 383

Methods: The method of criticism is a rather simple trick in this case, but one that was well established in English historiography. The deceased king is presented as a bad example to influence the actions of the living king.

Subjects, patterns and cultural substrates of judgement: In our case, it is not just a single misstep or a vice that the king is accused of; rather, it is his way of governing the realm that is somehow out of balance with the right order. It is interesting that Henry's dream has a very general quality and that it is general dissatisfaction that is voiced here. Accordingly, the remedy is very general as well – alms-giving and tax reduction. The king is not set up against the foil of a good ruler as so often happens in historiography. It is just implicit that something must be rotten in the state of Denmark if the ruler is attacked by the entirety of his kingdom. This set-up is validated by the supernatural quality of Henry's dream and the divine intervention at sea. God, whose actions can be seen in this world, lends his support to the critic.

Audiences: John of Worcester saw no need to veil his criticism with irony or by skirting around the issue of the subjects' grievances. This might be due to the unique situation under King Stephen's rule, which was not uncontested. He was only the nephew of his predecessor Henry I, and Mathilda, Henry's legitimate daughter, pressed her claim as well. With two rival pretenders, grievances and demands could be addressed far more openly, because both contenders had to tolerate criticism to a certain extent if they did not want to lose all their followers.

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Aims: Again, with regard to the aims of his criticism, John of Worcester seems to have had a straightforward agenda: the reduction of taxes. But there is an underlying discourse about the king's readiness to ask for and accept counsel, and this as well as the denigration of his predecessor, the dead king, is a common trope. It is not only the reduction of taxes that is addressed, but also the ruler's susceptibility to criticism.

Theoretical frame and self-reflection: This historical narrative does not explicitly refer to any theory of criticism, but the underlying framework is the well-known and well-established method of using history as an argument. Moreover, incidents of God's interaction with the world serve to validate the position of the critic. John of Worcester was aware that he was criticising the king, and he knew that in doing so he was part of a long line of tradition, and he ensured that his tale could be understood as an act of censure performed by God himself.

Concepts and their history: With regard to his concept of criticism, it is clear that John of Worcester does not belong to those historians who merely single out individual missteps, vices or even persons for criticism, but is representative of a scholarly tradition with an overall pessimistic outlook on secular rule. It is not as if the king could redeem himself by atoning for a sin or fighting against a vice. The scene in John of Worcester shows rather general, grim views on the capability of kings to do right.

Orchestration and reception: The situation in 1140, when John's chronicle was written, was favourable to critics as we have seen. This might be the reason why John makes no effort to hide his criticism behind a veil of opaque stories, but pictures an uprising against the king instead, if only in the virtual reality of his dreams. This fits in well with the troubled legitimacy of King Stephen, whose rule was questioned in a public council after he had been captured at the battle of Lincoln in 1141.

Judging by the profile of our eight fields of inquiry, it does not seem too far-fetched to compare this example from twelfth century England to the representation of dissent in ancient China. Take, for example, a highly instructive scene of counsel in a relief carving from the famous funerary shrine of Wu Liang 武梁 (Figure 5). The shrine was erected in present-day Shandong 山東 province in 151 CE. A recent attempt at questioning the authenticity of the Wu Liang pictorial stones or the rubbings taken of them proved to be abortive,[6] and it is safe

6 For this attempt, see Michael Nylan, "Addicted to Antiquity" (*nigu*). A Brief History of the "Wu Family Shrines", 150–1961 CE, in: Cary Y. Liu/Anthony J. Barbieri-Low/Michael Nylan (eds.), Recarving China's Past. Art, Archaeology, and Architecture of the "Wu Family Shrines", New Haven, CT/London 2005, 513–559. For a refutation, see Akira Kuroda, Are the Wu Liang Shrine Pictorial Stones Forgeries? Examining the Han-Era Evidence, trans. by Keith N. Knapp, in: Asia Major. Third Series 23/2 (2010), 129–151. For the shrine and its pictorial art, see the

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to assume that the engraving represents the views of a second century CE Eastern Han 漢 local elite on the ideal relationship between a monarch and his retainers.

Fig. 5: Relief from the funerary shrine of Wu Liang 武梁

The pertinent section of the stone carving shows a scene at the court of King Cheng 成 of Zhou 周. He ruled from 1042 to 1006 BCE, that is more than 1100 years before the carving of the relief and more than 800 years before the Chinese empire was founded. Just like John of Worcester, the unknown artist uses history as an argument. In this case, however, the reference is to the very distant past. King Cheng was the third king of the Western Zhou dynasty, which had been established through conquest of the preceding Shang 商 dynasty by his father, King Wu 武, at the turn of the year 1046 BCE. King Wu died only two years after the conquest so that his son King Cheng succeeded to the throne in his minority.

classical study by Wu Hung, The Wu Liang Shrine. The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art, Stanford, CA 1989.

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What was known about his rule at the time of the Eastern Han, i. e. in the second century CE, was only late Confucian tradition. At the time of King Cheng's death in 1006 BCE, however, it was another four and a half centuries before Confucius would be born. Clearly, the stone tells us more about Eastern Han court life as seen from the provincial periphery than it does about the early Western Zhou period.

In the engraving, the boy-king is seated under a canopy. He is surrounded by his counsellors, who wear long garments and ceremonial caps and hold tablets in their hands. The person kneeling on the right side of the king, from our perspective on his left, is the Duke of Zhou (Zhou gong Dan 周公但). He was a younger brother of King Wu and acted as his chief advisor. When King Wu died, the Duke of Zhou stepped in as regent, as King Cheng was too young to rule. At least this is what tradition tells us. At the same time, there are a few excavated bronze inscriptions, and also one or two preserved documents indicating that he in fact might have usurped the throne for a period of six years. In spite of this contradictory evidence, later generations generally portrayed him as a paragon of Confucian virtue. He is said to have acted as a loyal regent for his nephew and to have selflessly stepped down when the child reached majority. This is also how the engraving depicts him. He is portrayed as a loyal advisor to the infant King Cheng. (Figure 6)

Fig. 6: Relief from the funerary shrine of Wu Liang 武梁, detail

Now let us take a closer look at the scene of counsel itself. Firstly, this is not a vision in a king's dream but a court scene, indicating that giving advice to a king was already conceived of as a formal institutionalised act at the time when the shrine was erected in the second century CE. Secondly, the act of advising and possibly criticising the ruler is legitimised by the reference to a historical precedent, namely the good counsel given to the infant King Cheng by his uncle and advisor, the Duke of Zhou. Thirdly, the engraving indicates that the act (and institution) of giving advice and criticising the ruler is the joint that connects the actual rule of a dynastic family with the court officials' claim to the rule of the worthy, on the basis of talent and achievement. That is, it reconciles dynastic with

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meritocratic rule. From the point of view of the history of Chinese imperial institutions, this joint was of vital importance since it served to balance the interests of advisors, namely so-called scholar-officials, and the dynastic family.

When we look at the Chinese tradition of criticising the ruler with our main criteria for the comparison of dissent in mind, it becomes clear that it bears some marked resemblance to medieval European views. For example, with regard to its **aims**, it is obvious that the Chinese tradition is likewise strongly influenced by the trope about the king's readiness to ask for and accept counsel. As in the case of John of Worcester, it is often not a single mistake but the quality of government in general that is criticised. Although the monarch is normally not attacked by all his subjects, his advisors, acting as representatives, claim the right to censure his rule in its entirety. That is, **subjects and patterns of judgement** seem to have been very similar in early China and in medieval Europe.

As for the **methods** of criticising rulers, it is obvious that ancient Chinese counsellors played by the same rules as English historiographers: they used former kings as good or bad examples to influence the actions of the living king. This is what Jörn Rüsen called "exemplary narrative" (*exemplarisches Erzählen*) and what might well be a historiographical universal.[7] By virtue of their profession and since they were holding a corresponding office, Chinese counsellors often shared John of Worcester's general grim view on the capability of kings to do right. As for the **addressees and senders** of their critique, it should be added that it was directed at both the monarch and their own peers, to contemporary and future counsellors, who were expected to live up to their predecessors' professional ethics. This is important for the history of **orchestration and reception** of censure in China. It was not only an "increase in the emperor's power"[8] or the gradual institutionalisation of criticism that was responsible for rhetorical cunning, indirectness and subtle irony but also the aesthetic predilections of the advisors, who viewed themselves as so-called scholar-officials.

In the German Empire of the fourteenth century, too, we come across the phenomenon of the counsellor whose ruler, King Wenzel (1361–1419), refuses to accept counsel and as a result exacerbates the crisis surrounding his acceptance to the point that he is deposed by means of an institutional procedure. The literary form of this criticism of a ruler is the topical political lament; we do not, however, possess an actual illustration of it. The author of the 116-verse German rhymed oration 'Von der fürsten chrieg und des reiches steten', Peter Suchen-

7 See Jörn Rüsen, Die vier Typen des historischen Erzählens [The Four Types of Historical Narrative], in: Idem, Zeit und Sinn. Strategien historischen Denkens [Time and Meaning. Strategies of Historical Thought] (Fischer-Taschenbücher 7435. Wissenschaft), Frankfurt a. Main 1990, 153–230.

8 See David Schaberg, Playing at Critique. Indirect Remonstrance and the Formation of *Shi* Identity, in: Martin Kern (ed.), Text and Ritual in Early China, Seattle 2005, 194–225, here 215.

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wirt,[9] laments that the war between princes and cities brought only disadvantages to all people as well as the two sides in the conflict. While the subject is an internal German quarrel between two powerful political groups, the poet refrains from assigning the blame to one party, instead exhorting both to choose peace and focussing his criticism and admonishment on the king. After all, peace has been disrupted because the ruler has failed: the eagle, symbol of the German Reich, is moulting, telling us that King Wenzel is weak. Suchenwirt admonishes him: "Set out and go to war, go on an imperial journey to Rome to gain manifold glory, because you are the Roman King and bear this name on earth."[10] This is saying no less than that the ruler should seek Imperial honours as the crowning glory of his rule, as only a strong central power can unify the diverse particular forces.

The poet is looking for a remedy for one of the worst ills that could befall a commonwealth: an internal war. And his advice is for the idle king to increase his acceptance among his subjects by being crowned emperor, in order to act as a true ruler and restore domestic peace, all of which will re-establish the realm's capacity to act. His advice is concrete, but refers to the ever more entrenched crisis and proposes an effective remedy. At the same time his advice is admonishment, pointing to the classical kingly virtues courage and largesse and intensifying the criticism by comparing father and son: Wenzel must remember his royal descent and strive to follow the example of his father and predecessor:

> "The realm has not had an emperor since your father's day. Step into Emperor Charles's footsteps, and your name shall be named in every corner of the realm, because you care for the realm and the law in the true spirit of the constitution, ensuring that cities and princes remain upright and do not condone injustice, and thus you are a fair judge for poor and for rich."[11]

Looking at this short passage through the lens of our categories we discover the ruler being **addressed** directly and by name: "King Wenzel, take care!"[12] While the powerful particular forces are exhorted to keep still, the king is admonished to act by the travelling poet, a poet who tells us his own name quite frankly, who sees himself as the **mouthpiece** of the powerless populace. This, together with being an intellectual, is his **legitimation.**

The **pattern** of criticising the king is the society in disarray caused by the head of the realm. It is seen against the foil of good rule, not remembered from the distant past but seen in the previous generation during the day of Emperor

9 Peter Suchenwirt's Werke aus dem vierzehnten Jahrhunderte. Ein Beytrag zur Zeit- und Sittengeschichte, ed. u. mit einer Einleitung, historischen Bemerkungen u. einem Wörterbuche begleitet v. Alois Primisser, Vienna 1827 (Unchanged Repr. 1961), Nr. 37 'Von der fürsten chrieg und von des reiches steten', V. 110–112.

10 Ibid., V. 82–86.

11 Ibid., V. 93–102.

12 Ibid., V. 79.

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Charles IV, Wenzel's father. Suchenwirt employs the **method** of citing an example, using the father's name as a beacon to guide the way for the incompetent son, and also as a warning to the king: if he should not follow in his father's footsteps, the contrast between the two would inevitably undermine his acceptance with the populace. As is often the case in topical political poetry, the examples are near-contemporary and historically concrete. As the Habsburg duke Albrecht III of Austria was Suchenwirt's patron at times, the poet presumably found the **audience** for his oral performances at the ducal court, but not only there. As a travelling professional poet he would have performed his works in front of a wider public, too, not least because the initial circumstances described, the War of the Cities of 1387–88, affected nearly all social classes. The immediate **objective** of the criticism voiced in 1387 was without a doubt to push Wenzel 'the Lazy' to action, to ensure he did his duty as *rex pacificus* and to send him to Rome.

A significant difference between this and both the English and the Chinese examples is the part played by the public in Suchenwirt's lament of the times. While the poet is directing his admonishments and exhortations at the king, his poem addresses the people all over the realm. This public becomes the witness to his – Suchenwirt's – giving the ruler a piece of helpful advice. And because the public is aware of this advice, pressure on the incompetent king will be increased should he not act on the advice. In this way the critical function of the 'advice by means of a lament of the times' differs significantly from the situation in the Chinese Empire, where the counsellors advise the emperor in a courtly setting. The publicists of the High Middle Ages influenced and shaped public opinion. With the spectacular deposition of the German King Wenzel of the House of Luxemburg in 1400, the criticism of the ruler had achieved its objective, but achieved it rather more spectacularly than the poet would probably have imagined.

We hope this will help to illustrate how very promising it is to study the ways of criticising the ruler in pre-modern monarchical societies from a comparatist transcultural perspective and how much common ground can be explored when comparing cultures and societies as distant from each other as early China and medieval Europe. Even in this extreme case, it is possible to develop criteria of comparison, which are both applicable and suitable in the sense of proving new insights into the workings of *Macht* and *Herrschaft*, and to employ these in a fruitful discussion of significant differences and resemblances.

Finally, it seems appropriate to summarise the results not only of the contributions to this volume but of the discussions that ensued from the presentations at the conference itself with regard to the above-mentioned eight fields of inquiry. Already at the conference we had put together two lectures from different disciplines, but with thematic proximity, in one block and discussed

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them as a tandem. We retained this transdisciplinary concept for the proceedings, as illustrated by the table of contents.

Addressees and senders: While we usually have no problem identifying the senders of criticism, provided that we have a datable source with a known author and information about the intention of his writing, the addressee might not be as easily identifiable. There are many cases where the addressee is the ruler, though; be it a particular ruler (Matthew Strickland, Lena Oetzel, Jan-Dirk Müller), a ruler of the past, who serves as a stand-in for the actual ruler (Charles West), or the ruler as the head of political and social order, which is discussed (Heiner Roetz, Martin Powers, Raji Steineck, Maureen Perrie, Egon Flaig, Jan-Dirk Müller), or an imaginary good ruler, who is the subject of a genre as in the mirrors for princes (Matthew Giancarlo). The inscrutability of the addressee holds true especially for works of literature where the picture of the ruler is distorted to such a degree that it is impossible to identify the historical ruler addressed (Annette Gerok-Reiter). However, the fact alone that the ruler can be depicted as having flaws is telling with regard to the degree of general acceptance of criticism. In rare examples, the monarchs themselves address prevalent negative verdicts on their own persons or rule or those of their predecessors to either defend themselves against misjudgements (Birgit Ulrike Münch) or to present themselves in stark contrast to a disliked predecessor (Gloria Chicote). The dynamic between sender and addressee can acquire a particular intensity when the elites in question are party to sending the criticism (Stephen Church, Mohamad El-Merheb, Lisa Cordes).

Methods: One very effective medium of criticism is literature because the critic can play with motifs, *topoi*, references, figures of speech and the audience's expectation to ensure the intended result (Annette Gerok-Reiter, Lisa Cordes, Jan-Dirk Müller). Even within the context of genres like historiography and of works of art, we can usually identify the use of commonly recurring literary devices like juxtaposition (Gloria Chicote, Birgit Ulrike Münch), foreshadowing dreams (Matthew Strickland) or parallelism (Mohamad El-Merheb) or legitimising by myths (Raji Steineck). Even the arrangement of texts or textual units could be used to target one specific action of one specific ruler (Charles West). Apart from these methods of indirect criticism, there are also entire genres that are directly connected to political censure like the administrative sources whose purpose it was to discuss the performance of institutions (Heiner Roetz, Martin Powers, Matthew Giancarlo) or specific acts of ruling (Lena Oetzel). Dissent that was articulated on a non-institutional basis can be reflected in various kinds of sources (Stephen Church, Maureen Perrie, Egon Flaig). Methods of criticism prove to be very flexible and were adjusted according to the available opportunities. It is not impossible that criticism was sometimes delivered so subtly that it can no longer be identified as such.

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