Hundreds and thousands of texts, and thousands of miniatures, are dedicated to gods who have been prayed to in the East since time immemorial. The journal *Manuscripta Orientalia* and the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences are unveiling with this publication a new section, "Oriental Pantheon". This section is designed for publishing materials on the international project of the same name, with the ultimate goal of creating a complete encyclopaedic reference work on the personages of the traditional religions of Oriental countries, and also votive items, works of arts (primarily written monuments), customs and ritual practices connected with them.

The materials which we are planning to publish in this section are of the nature of works in progress, as the ultimate aim of the project "Oriental Pantheon" is to gather, analyse, and then summarise and classify all accessible information about gods, supernatural beings and items which were believed in at various times in the countries of the East — and the scale of this task is such that it may take many years. This is why we consider it necessary to start familiarising the reader with the preliminary results of our studies now, and call on all interested specialists to take part in our work.

Project coordinator,

I. Alimov

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I. Alimov

**THE WORK BY ZHOU CHENG:**

**“RESEARCH ON THE EASTERN SONG CAPITAL”**: INFORMATION ON TEMPLES AND JOSS-HOUSES

Song joss-houses (*miao*) and temples (*ci*) located in the eastern capital of the empire (the modern Kaifeng, with the Song name Bianjing) is known to us from a number of historical works, and one of the most representative among them is the book by the Qing author Zhou Cheng 周城 "Song dong jing kao" (宋東京考 "Research on the eastern Song capital"). About Zhou Cheng himself we know extremely little: evidently, he lived in the years of the rule of Kang-xi, Yong-zheng and Qiang-long (i.e. from 1662 to 1795), his second name was Shi-pao 石琥, and he came from the province Zhejiang. His work "Song dong jing kao" (20 *juans*) consists of over 500 fragments, united into 42 thematic sections (門 *men*). It contains various information about Kaifeng over 170 years, while this city was the eastern capital of Song China; in working on the book, Zhou Cheng employed over 300 diverse written sources, a part of which have not survived; the authenticity of the information he gives is in no doubt: according to Wang Mei (王澣 first half of the 18th century), the author of one of the forewords to "Song dong jing kao" (dated 1731):

"Zhou Shi-pao visited Kaifeng three times, and he went everywhere in his searches. [He], if he found something in books, immediately wanted to see it with his own eyes; if it was not possible to see it, then he made visits to old residents to hear confirmation [of what he had read] from them. When he could neither see nor hear he went to the so-called unofficial history of the Baiguan officials, and checked their information too..." [1].

The value of the work by Zhou Cheng, writes contemporary researcher and textologist Dan Yuan-mu, is also that there are very few books devoted to the eastern Song capital: we know that in North Song one Song Min-qi 佘敏求 wrote "Dong jing ji" (東京記 "Notes on the Eastern Capital"), but this book has not survived; the work of Southern Song Meng Yuan-lao 孟元老 "Dong jing meng hua lu" (東京夢華錄 "Notes of Vivid Dreams of the Eastern Capital"), for all its uniqueness, is too fictionalised to give a full and objective idea of the Song Kaifeng [2].

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