

**Translating History:**  
**Arthur W. Hummel's *Autobiography of a Chinese Historian***

Brian MOLOUGHNEY 你來恩

Division of Humanities, University of Otago

The publication in 1926 of the first volume of *Gushi bian* 古史辨 (Disputing Antiquity) was like a ‘clap of thunder’ that reverberated throughout China’s scholarly community, initiating debates which continue to this day. This first volume was followed by six more; together they provided a crucial forum for debate about China’s cultural and intellectual foundations.

The driving force behind this iconoclastic movement was Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893-1980), who coordinated the debates and edited many of the volumes. At the beginning of the first volume, Gu included a book-length autobiographical preface in which he charted his own journey through the tumultuous intellectual currents of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century China. The preface was immediately recognized for its human interest, but also as an engaged but critical reflection on the challenges of refashioning China’s cultural heritage for the post-imperial era.

Arthur Hummel, living in China at the time the first volume of *Gushi bian* was published, recognized its significance and the value that would be derived from making it more widely available. ‘In the present state of Chinese studies in the West,’ he argued, ‘there is nothing more needed than the translation of representative Chinese productions of a scholarly nature, both ancient and modern’. In this paper, I will examine Hummel’s translation of Gu Jiegang’s autobiography, and assess its significance for advancing the understanding of Chinese scholarship in the West.