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**The 25th Biennial Conference of
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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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KEYNOTE LECTURES

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Rein Raud (Tallinn University)

The Language of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Language

One of the recurring issues in the discussions of Chinese philosophy is the role of the structure of the classical Chinese language in the formation of Chinese philosophical thought. On the one hand, certain Western assumptions about language postulate a transparent and universal matrix to which all the languages of the world can supposedly be reduced. On the other hand, classical Chinese linguistic practice resists such assumptions, although efforts have been made to discern a Western-type structure also in Chinese. Chad Hansen's claim, put forward more than 40 years ago, that the Chinese worldview is based on a whole-part, or mereological, approach, as opposed to the Western class-member, or object-oriented approach, is still being debated vigorously from both sides. In the meantime, advances in linguistics and cultural theory have left the 20th century Western paradigm behind and are more open to the acknowledgment of linguistic diversity. What does this mean for philosophy of language? Or cross-cultural philosophical encounters in general? These and other related questions will be discussed during the talk.

Teemu Ruskola (University of Pennsylvania)

The Unmaking of the Chinese Working Class – Primitive Accumulation in the Age of Chinese Capital

The English working class was born in the wake of the Enclosure Movement, which dispossessed peasants of their land and left them with no option but to sell their labor, thus forming the foundation for the nation's industrial proletariat. In China, too, there is occurring a similar dispossession of peasantry that is often referred to a "New Enclosure Movement." However, processes that took place over several centuries in England have been telescoped into just three decades in China. What is more, they are taking place in the opposite order: the initial commodification of industrial labor in the 1990s was accompanied by a seemingly inexhaustible stream of migrant laborers into cities even without large-scale commodification of rural land. Why, then, dispossess a peasantry that has already submitted to capital voluntarily, without the need to resort to forcible dislocation? This talk locates these events in a longer history of landholding in China as well as shifting structures of global capitalism and what David Harvey calls the "New Imperialism."



LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Sabrina Ardizzoni (University for Foreigners of Siena)

Emotional Labour in Healthcare-Service Interpreting: A Surplus Burden in Chinese-Italian Translation Task

According to official data, as of 2023 there were 284,525 residents of Chinese origin in Italy (ISTAT, 2023). The majority of immigrants in this community speak Italian with little proficiency, making it extremely difficult for them to communicate with doctors and other healthcare professionals. Therefore, health facilities throughout Italy often offer interpreting and translation services specifically addressing Chinese-speaking patients. My contribution highlights what Hochschild's (1983) posits as emotional labour, with specific regard to medical settings. This process, in fact, involves a number of delicate issues, including those that can be strongly related to life or death, or that may be offensive to the interpreter's moral beliefs (e.g., abortion, euthanasia, etc.) or involve personal emotive reactions (e.g., aversion to smells or disgust-eliciting visuals). As is obvious from numerous oral narratives involving professional interpreters and their self-perception, just after a short period of exposure to the medical field, many choose to leave in favor of less emotionally taxing domains, like business interpreting. Which kind of interpreting tasks are most challenging in medical setting? Is it possible to pinpoint strategies on how to cope with the emotional burden of the healthcare interpreting? Starting from interviews with professional and non-professional interpreters in healthcare services, both of Italian and of Chinese origin, and on-site observations of interpreter-mediated dialogues, I am going to analyze several significant cases, in order to highlight these particular aspects of the interpreter's profession. This research is part of Tuscany Health Ecosystem-Spoke 3, a project carried on by University for Foreigners of Siena.

Chiara Bertulesi (University of Milan)

Science Popularisation and Political Legitimation in China: A Case Study of the 'Scientific & Technological Term of the Day' Digital Column

The Chinese Party-state has long regarded scientific and technological progress as a crucial component of national development, and the official discourse on the topic has often acquired political and ideological connotations. Moreover, the significance attributed to public scientific literacy has led to the implementation of numerous projects aimed at popularising specialised knowledge. Today, these projects also increasingly utilise the enhanced capabilities offered by digital media (Yin and Yan 2021). This paper delves into the relationship between popularisation discourse (Calsamiglia 2003), politics, and ideology through the lens of political legitimation. It presents a case study on the column 'Scientific & Technological Term of the Day' (每日科技名词), a terminology popularisation project implemented through the institutional digital platform Xuexi qiangguo 学习强国 since 2019. Drawing on critical discourse analysis and the study of discursive legitimation (van Leeuwen 2007), as well as frame analysis (Entman 1993), this study examines a corpus of expository texts included in the terminological entries of the column to provide additional knowledge related to the terms. The aim is to identify linguistic elements and discursive strategies that lead to a shift from the informative and explanatory functions characteristic of the genre towards conveying ideologically connoted meanings. The focus is particularly placed on the specific representation of China and the Party-state in the texts, which, it is argued, also serves purposes related to political legitimacy and the creation of public consensus.

Victoria Bogushevskaya (University of Salento)

On Sinicised and Sinitic Toponyms in Russian Primorye

By the XVI-XVII centuries, the two major Tungusic indigenous groups who lived within the territory of modern-day Russian Primorye were the woji and warka, the ancestors of the Nanai and the Oroch respectively. Their languages were orally transmitted; accordingly, there are no written records of geographical names that existed in this territory in ancient times. Before the 1860s, Han-Chinese traders and settlers dominated the region and monopolized trade with the indigenous population leading to Sinification of indigenous Tungus-Manchu place names. Subsequently, European and Russian explorers of Primorye borrowed a considerable number of the indigenous toponyms from Qing geographical sources. The usage of these distorted indirect borrowings – which number increases from north to south, with many following the riverbanks and the coastal line of the Sea of Japan from Olga Bay to the border with Korea, with a large number concentrated on the right bank of the Ussuri river – continued for almost a century. The first objective of the paper is to analyse the factors that contributed to the spread of Sinicised and Sinitic toponyms in the late XIX- early XX centuries. The second objective involves defining the criteria used by Chinese settlers to assign names to geographical objects. An example of a hybrid hydronym, Tungus-plus-Chinese, will be brought to light, resulting in the renaming of Turtle Lake into Tiger Lake. As the final observations point out, local toponyms are of utmost importance due to their ability to reveal the secrets of the peoples who previously inhabited the area, and often serve as the only evidence of the languages used in past eras.

Hsiang-Yin Sasha CHEN (Academia Sinica)

The Language of Vengeance: The Denunciation of Target Enemies in the Early Soviet and Chinese Cultural Revolutions

This paper investigates the language in both political slogans and big-character posters (大字報) at the beginning of the Soviet and Chinese Cultural Revolutions in 1928 and 1966, respectively. The first part focuses on political slogans in the Soviet and Chinese official newspapers, with specific reference to *Pravda* and *Renmin Ribao*, showing how the two authorities constructed the model of young red guards. These slogans agitate and mobilize students not only to challenge parents and teachers, but also to participate in political struggles or movements, in order to swear allegiance to Stalin and Mao. This section examines the narrative shaping the hero Pavel Morozov, a young red guard of Stalinism in 1932, and its use of language in the Soviet official newspaper *Pravda*. It will also demonstrate how the language used to construct the Soviet model was translated into Chinese in the 1950s and later widely appropriated in *Renmin Ribao* during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The second part traces the use of the revolutionary language learned from the Soviet Union in big-character posters to denounce the target enemies — “five black categories” (黑五類), i.e. landlords, kulaks, counter-revolutionaries (including the Soviet revisionists), bad influencers and right-wingers at the beginning of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

Beatrice Gallelli (Ca' Foscari University of Venice/Istituto Affari Internazionali, IAI, Italy)

From Crisis to Achievements: Representing China's Success in Greening Rural Areas

Tackling environmental degradation has recently become a key priority in China's political agenda. Already the Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao administration made the political commitment of mitigating the ecological impacts of decades of frenetic economic growth by promoting a new “people-centre” and “harmonious” development model. The expression “ecological civilization” – borrowed from the Soviet Union and developed within China's intellectual discourse in the 1990s (Clivio 2019; Marinelli 2018) – has been adopted by Chinese official discourse already during the Hu-Wen decade to symbolise the growing concern towards the natural environmental degradation by China's leadership. The current President Xi Jinping has made it his banner-term through which moulding a “beautiful China”: from embodying a “sense of crisis,” Xi Jinping has turned it into a celebrating narrative of country self-made ecological rejuvenation (Goron 2018). This presentation attempts to provide insights into the way in which China's official discourse under Xi Jinping has transformed the issues of tackling environmental degradation from a problem to an achievement. It will do so by focusing on the case study of “Green Rural Revival Programme” launched in 2003 by Xi Jinping when he was Party's secretary of Zhejiang Province. By analysing how the Green Rural Revival Programme and its achievements are discursively constructed, the presentation will provide insights into the instrumental use of the environmental protection narratives in helping to shape a global image of China and its “story” of success.

Mariarosaria Gianninoto (Paul Valéry University-Montpellier 3)

Western Manuscript Dictionaries of Chinese as Sources of Linguistic and Historical Information

China has an impressive lexicographic tradition (Bottéro 2019), playing a major role in the global history of lexicography (Considine 2019). Since the late 16th century, Chinese and its varieties were also the target or source languages of dictionaries written in European languages. This production of Western dictionaries of Chinese was the result of interactions between the Western and Chinese lexicographic traditions, an encounter inducing “new lexicographic practices” (Klöter 2019), at both the macrostructural and microstructural levels. Hence, these works are crucial in the history of lexicography and their entries provide invaluable information for historical phonology, lexicology and grammatology. In order to investigate the contribution of Western manuscript dictionaries in the history of Chinese linguistics as well as from the perspective of cultural exchanges, ChEDiL research program (funded by the French National Research Agency) gather more than twenty researchers in the fields of Chinese cultural history, history of linguistics, history of knowledge and digital humanities, analyzing the same corpus of manuscript dictionaries from complementary perspectives. This research program includes among its goals the digitalization of manuscripts and the creation of an open-access database of transcribed dictionaries, allowing the comparison of a large number of dictionaries and entries. This will be crucial to identify different Western and Chinese sources that influenced these dictionaries. This communication presents the linguistic research conducted in the framework of this project, aiming to analyze this corpus from the perspectives of historical lexicography, lexicology, phonology and textual genetics.

E. John Gregory (United States Military Academy in West Point)

Mimicking Taiwanese Modernity: The CCP's Illusory Political Discourse

The genre of critical political commentary within the PRC helps us understand how the CCP deflects its own political-theoretical incoherence by providing outlets for its political scholars, commentators, and citizens to engage in a mimetic performance of political criticism, one that allows them a brief escape from the infantilizing didacticism of domestic political discourse while also fostering an external image of China as a politically modern state. Two modes of political commentary simultaneously exist within the PRC. The first combines a highly sloganeering and obtusely “theoretical” discourse of CCP Marxist-Maoist legitimacy with an ethno-civilizational appeal of which little attempt is made at theoretical reconciliation. The second is a liberal-democratic-sounding discourse that openly comments on politicians’ positions, social issues, voter sentiment, national issues, external considerations, political strategizing, and other aspects of foreign elections, including Taiwan’s. While Chinese political scientists, erstwhile political commentators, and citizens on social media are prohibited from commenting upon the political affairs of their own state beyond sloganeering, they are momentarily free to perform as critical modern citizens and appear as such to the outside world when commenting on the nuances of Taiwanese politics. Because China maintains a discourse that Taiwan is in fact part of China, this serves to appropriate a specifically “Chinese” modernity. PRC media such as externally focused Haixia Luntan (海峡論壇) (focusing specifically on Taiwan) and domestically focused productions such as CCTV news channels serve as platforms for the shaping this political discourse.

Lillian Li-Hsing Ho (United States Military Academy in West Point)

Demonizing Democracy: CCP-Led Smear Campaign in the Taiwan Presidential Election in 2024

In early 2024, Taiwan witnessed its eighth presidential direct election. Notably, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), devoid of voting rights, continued its active involvement. Besides employing rhetoric involving military and economic threats to dissuade the Taiwanese from supporting pro-independence candidates, the CCP’s interference tactics encompass a series of what can be termed as “demonizing democracy” propaganda discourse. These propaganda narratives can be categorized as the demonization of the democratic political machinery itself and the demonization of political figures, extending beyond the candidates. An intriguing example is the targeted attacks on the incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen. Apart from various derogatory short videos, an e-book titled *The Secret History of Tsai Ing-wen* emerged, generating numerous AI-generated virtual anchor videos based on its content. The vigorous assault on a lame-duck president who has served two terms over eight years and is no longer seeking reelection is not only due to apprehension of Tsai Ing-wen’s campaigning influence but also an attempt to discredit not just the individual but the democratic system itself. This paper will interpret the anti-democratic discourse in *The Secret History of Tsai Ing-wen* from a discourse analysis perspective. Preliminary observations indicate that the writing style of this book directly inherits from late Qing Dynasty sensational novels, not only in its literary techniques but also in the attacks on Tsai Ing-wen’s policies and person. In fact, these attacks are largely grounded in a patriarchal value system or an anti-democratic ideology that stands in opposition to contemporary democratic political culture.

Chunying HUANG (University of Zurich/Shanghai University)

Xūcí (Function Word) ‘Yě’ (也) in Dìngzhōu Hànmù (Hàn Tomb) Bamboo Slips Lúnyǔ (the Analects of Confucius)

This article intends to study the word “Yě 也” in Dìngzhōu Hànmù (Hàn Tomb) Bamboo Slips *Lúnyǔ* (*The Analects of Confucius* 論語), for this is the most prominent feature of the bamboo slips compared with the transmitted edition. The morphology, syntactic structure and function of all sentences with “Yě” in is statistically classified firstly. For the 37 more “Yě” statistically significant in the bamboo version than the transmitted one of *Lúnyǔ*, the prosodic grammar theory is applied to analyze the reasons behind them. On the basis of prosodic grammar theory, we propose the concept of “sense group prosody (*yìqún yùnlǜ* 意群韻律).” It is found that 1. “Yě” often appears in the middle and at the end of clauses. It appears after subject-predicate, subject-predicate-object, subject-predicate and verb-object structures, as well as nouns (noun phrases), adverbs, verbs (verb phrases) and a few adjectives, and is preceded by mainly subjects, a few independent words and expressions and adverbials. 2. “Ye” is a function word. It functions mainly as judgments and statements. In addition, it is also used to express questions, imperatives and exclamation. The places where the word “Yě” appears are mostly the focus of sentence information; 3. The bamboo slip version of *Lúnyǔ* is more in line with the prosodic feature of Chinese language.

Lutgard Lams (KU Leuven)

Decoding Discourse on the EU-China Relations in the Chinese Official Media Accounts about EU-China Summits

Since the Sino-U.S. trade war, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the ensuing NATO expansion, the concern about a foreign ‘encirclement’ of China has preoccupied the Chinese official mindset. This is the general picture emerging from official Chinese media accounts about China’s troubled relationship with the US. It begs the question of how Chinese perceptions of the European Other are articulated in the Chinese media, particularly in the English-language newspapers catering to the foreign community, and whether these views have evolved over the last decade. Therefore, this study sets out to trace discursive patterns in the representation of the Chinese Self and the European Other in Chinese English-language media accounts (news articles and op-eds) about the EU-China Summits in 2022 and 2023. The English-language corpus is selected as it constitutes the gateway for the Chinese authorities to disseminate their views and understanding of the EU. In the analysis of how the EU-China relationship and its protagonists are framed, the study’s focus lies on the linguistic underpinnings of the framing process. This way, framing theory is combined with insights from critical discourse analysis and language pragmatics. Not only does the study show the usefulness of a linguistic approach to a framing analysis, but it also demonstrates how a linguistic text exploration can uncover ideological processes of Othering and appraisal of the Self.

Laura Locatelli (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Exploring the Semantic and Pragmatic Features of Chinese Lexical Passive Constructions: A Corpus-Based Comparative Study on 遭 zāo, 受 shòu, and 得到 dédào Structures

The passive voice system in Chinese has long been a contentious issue due to its unique characteristics. There is now a general consensus that passive sentences in modern Chinese are typically constructed with the passive marker 被 *bèi* placed between the patient and the optional agent. However, over the last few decades, an increasing number of studies have focused on non-canonical forms (Cui & Sung 2022). Building upon the three forms of Chinese passive structures identified by Po-Ching & Rimmington (2016), this study investigates the category of “lexical passives,” which employ a specific set of verbs to convey a passive meaning to the sentence, following the pattern in (1) Patient + verb + (agent/other modifiers) + nominalized verb. The 遭 *zāo*, 受 *shòu* and 得到 *dédào* structures were retrieved from three different corpora and analyzed to gain a comprehensive understanding on their semantic and pragmatic interpretation. Specifically, by adopting a Construction Grammar approach, this study provides insights into (i) the correlation between different LPCs and the semantic construal of the two thematic roles, and (ii) the emotional involvement associated with each LPC. The results indicate that LPCs represent three distinct event types from the perspective of the undergoer, differing in emotional valence and the speaker’s intended pragmatic effect. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses, it becomes evident that the terms “patient” and “agent” are broad generalizations that do not always apply. Furthermore, besides revealing a tendency to form fixed semantic patterns, collostructional analysis (Jing-Schmidt & Jing 2011) further confirms that the contrasting meanings among the LPCs contribute to achieving different purposes within the discourse, conveying various experiences ranging from the victimization with *zāo*, the sense of successful accomplishment expressed by *dédào*, to the weaker emotional impact exhibited through *shòu*.

Emma Lupano (University of Cagliari)

Patriotic Algorithms? The Representation of Artificial Intelligence in China’s Official and Media Discourse

China is considered the main competitor to U.S. dominance in the technology sector, and much of the geopolitical contest is tied to Artificial Intelligence (AI). The PRC government has invested significantly in the development of AI since the early 2010s. From 2015 onwards, institutions have actively promoted, both rhetorically and financially, the use of AI across various sectors of industry and society, deeming its development a national strategic priority, and openly stating the Chinese ambition to emerge as a global leader in AI (Zeng 2022). This contribution sets off from the analysis of the 2017 New Generation AI Development Plan, which can be considered the text at the basis of the public narrative on the subject (Roberts et al. 2021), in order to bring to light concepts, frames, and keywords chosen by the Chinese leadership to represent AI and its engagement with it. The same approach, blending corpus linguistics tools with frame analysis, is applied to a corpus of news commentaries published by a non-institutional outlet such as Pengpai 澎湃 in the months following the public debut of ChatGPT in 2022. By presenting the main ingredients of the national discourse on AI, the contribution discusses: 1) the degree of alignment with the global debate on the several ethical, social, and economic issues related to AI (Floridi 2022; Mao and Shi-Kupfer 2023); 2) to which extent the Chinese official and media narrative(s) on AI serve the patriotic discourse and, by that means, the Party’s legitimising discursive strategy.

Damien NG (Independent researcher)

China's Post-Covid Economic Recovery in the Headlines: A Critical Discourse Analysis of CNN and Xinhua

The paper explores the media representation of China's economic recovery since the relinquishment of its stringent zero Covid-19 policy on 7 December 2022. The Chinese government's decision to ease restrictive public health measures has consequently led to greater optimism among many international financial institutions like Goldman Sachs (2023) and J.P Morgan (2023) that the East Asian nation would stage a robust economic bounce and spur major global growth. Nevertheless, China's widely expected strong economic revival in 2023 did not fully materialise largely due to deflationary, demographic and geopolitical pressures. Coupled with a lingering domestic property crisis and weak external demand, China's economy is expected to decelerate in 2024 to 4.6 percent in comparison with 5.4 percent in the previous year (International Monetary Fund 2023). Against this backdrop, the paper examines the representation of the country's post-Covid economic development in two media outlets. They include CNN, which is a news channel headquartered in the United States, as well as Xinhua, which is a state-run news agency based in China. The corpus comprises 200 headlines, with CNN and Xinhua each accounting for 100 of them. As far as the methodology is concerned, the paper adopts both quantitative and qualitative approaches from the realm of critical discourse analysis to uncover the dominant media narratives in CNN and Xinhua. In so doing, the paper aims to contribute to the scholarly discussion of the discursive strategies that the two news agencies might have deployed to represent the Chinese economic reopening.

Luisa M. Paternicò (University of Naples "L'Orientale")

Chinese Language Mechanism According to Antelmo Severini

Despite being mainly remembered and appreciated as a Japanologist, Antelmo Severini (1828-1909) devoted his studies to several aspects of Chinese language and linguistics. He took part to some heated debates of his time, e.g., on the monosyllabic nature of Chinese, and opposed the grammatical theories of the De Backer brothers, which were quite popular at the time in the framework of the new-born comparative linguistics. After a brief overview of Sinology in Italy in the 19th century and an introduction on Severini's life and work, this presentation will highlight Severini's contribution to the studies on Chinese language, finally focusing on an unknown work of his which, unfortunately, remained in manuscript form, with exception of its preamble: the *Elements of Chinese Grammar* (original Italian title: *Elementi di Grammatica Cinese*). Despite the title, this work is not strictly a 'grammar' as we would understand nowadays. It is rather a brief treatise on Chinese language, in which the author expresses his ideas on the classification of Chinese words and on word-formation, rejecting different theories on the matter which were popular at his time. Considering that the 18th century has often been described as a time of decadence of Sinology in Italy, *Elements of Chinese Grammar* is an interesting text with peculiar linguistic considerations that might be worth analysing and divulging in order to disprove a false myth.

Nerina Piedra Molina (University of Granada)

The Metaphorical and Metonymic Use of the Hand in Chinese Language: A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis

This proposal aims to present a comprehensive analysis of the metaphorical and metonymic use of the hand in the Chinese language. Drawing upon the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the Metaphor Identification Procedure from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (MIPVU), this study explores one of the main metaphorical and metonymical senses of the word for "hand" (*shǒu*) in Chinese. The analysis is conducted using sentences from the OPUS2 Simplified Chinese corpus, specifically the MultiUN subcorpus, and references the categorization of metaphorical senses by Ning Yu (2003). The analysis reveals that the hand in Chinese can function as a "metaphonymy" (Goossens 1990) when combined with specific postpositions such as *lǐ* or *zhōng*, indicating 'within' or 'inside', and sometimes prepositions *zài* ('in,' with static verbs) or *cóng* ('from,' with dynamic verbs) as well, conveying the meaning of 'control.' This concept combines the metaphor THE HAND IS CONTROL and the metonymy THE HAND IS THE BODY, which is also evident in some common Chinese words whose characters contain the hand as a semantic radical, for example, *àn*, *wò*, *cāo*, *chí* and *kòng*. The hand's prominence in Chinese writing further contributes to the meaning and categorization of words, including metaphors and metonymies. This proposal highlights the significance of embodiment in language and cognition, emphasizing the role of the hand as a sensory and motor tool, and also sheds light on the interplay between language, cognition, and culture, specifically focusing on the metaphorical and metonymic use of the hand as "control" in the Chinese language.

Francesco Michael Scaringella (University of Milan)

From Promotion to Suspicion: Shifting Attitudes towards English Language Teaching in Chinese Official Media

Since the 1980s, English language proficiency has been considered as a crucial tool for China's modernization and economic development and has been actively promoted within the education system (Adamson 2004; Vickers and Zeng 2018). However, the status of English has become a debated topic within Chinese society in recent years, with some political representatives proposing a reduction in its importance. This topic has also been discussed in Chinese official media. While in 2019 an article published on the *Renmin Ribao* still emphasized the importance of the study of foreign languages (Liu, Zheng, and Tian 2019), more recently, the media have given significant space to voices who are critical towards English and its dreaded negative effects on society, and to analyses of policies which indirectly downsized its role in the education system, such as the 'double-reduction policy' (双减政策). This contribution analyzes the representation of the public debate on English teaching in the Chinese official media, especially the *Renmin Ribao*, based on a corpus of articles published between 2019 and 2023. The aim is to reveal a substantial shift in attitude by the Chinese government. Relying on a qualitative approach based on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003; van Dijk 2011), it particularly examines how social meanings and attitudes towards English are produced in the articles, with a special focus on 'ideology' (Gramsci 1971). In doing so, it attempts to contribute to the academic discussion on the relationship between education policies, public consensus, and media in China.

Andrea Scibetta (University for Foreigners of Siena)

Mapping and Analyzing Language Interpreting and Cultural Mediation Practices in Chinese in Italian Healthcare Settings

The issue of the exercise of language rights of Chinese-speakers in Italian social settings has gained an increasing importance in media and public discourse in the past few years (Pedone 2020; Scibetta 2022). The current contribution aims at introducing preliminary results drawn from the "THE (Tuscany Health Ecosystem) Spoke 3" project, the main aim of which is to investigate, from different perspectives, foreigners' attitudes towards the Italian public healthcare system, as well as their interactional practices with medical personnel. First, quantitative data about Chinese-speaking patients in the Tuscan public healthcare system, as well as an extensive mapping of language interpreting and cultural mediation services dedicated to these people in this specific area, will be provided. Moreover, after having provided results of a quantitative analysis drawing from questionnaires administered to around 150 Chinese patients about their attitudes towards the Tuscan healthcare system, interviews administered to Chinese-Italian mediators and excerpts of audio-recordings collected in different structures, involving doctor-patients interactions carried out with the presence of cultural mediators, will be analyzed. The analyses will follow criteria belonging both to Conversation Analysis (Jefferson 1974) and Qualitative Content Analysis (cf. Cho & Lee 2014), and coding and labeling processes will be carried out and monitored according to the principles of Chinese Discourse Studies (Shi-Xu 2014) Interactional patterns (e.g. turn-taking, sociolinguistic registers, illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of utterances, non-verbal and para-verbal language) and culture-based stereotypes occurring in conversations will be particularly investigated, especially in light of meaning negotiation conducted thanks to the presence of mediators. *This publication was produced with the co-funding of the European Union – Next Generation EU, in the context of The National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Investment 1.5 Ecosystems of Innovation, Project Tuscany Health Ecosystem (THE ECS00000017. Spoke 3)

Tereza Slaměnková (Palacký University Olomouc)

Speech Rhythm in Mandarin Chinese: A Case Study of Spontaneous Spoken Narrative

Prosodic research indicates that colloquial Mandarin Chinese is structured into syllables with different significance in the rhythmical flow. This phenomenon was thoroughly described by the phonetician O. Švarný. Simply speaking, his model's philosophy is built on an observation that rhythmical features are organized in terms of categorically distinct entities (e.g., stressed and unstressed syllables) and relations (e.g., a relatively stronger or weaker tone prominence). For understandable reasons, Švarný focused on the practical ends of the developed theory. He analyzed the prosodic interpretation of example sentences in learning materials for Chinese language students. In light of this, his works systematically describe rhythmical features of read speech. The developed theory and methodology are universal, however, and can therefore be applied to any spoken Chinese discourse. Taking a personal narrative as an example, this paper shifts the attention to a speech performance that represents a continuous flow of clauses created spontaneously at the moment of recording. On a global level, its rhythmical organization is similar to the read sentences. However, the analysis establishes two findings that seem germane. First, the storyteller chunks the messages in constituents of variable length. Among other things, the rhythmical flow is significantly modified by speech disfluencies and discourse-specific markers. Second, the narrative contains a considerably lower amount of stressed-prominence syllables. In contrast to the read speech, their use in the narrative is more selective: the storyteller highlights essential pieces of information in the context of the whole story plot, often occurring in longer strings of words.

Carlotta Sparvoli (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Two Documents for International Conflict Mediation: Modal Distribution and Argumentative Structure

This paper focuses on Political Discourse Analysis and aims to analyse the argumentative structure of two documents in which China presents itself as an authoritative mediator in the Russian-Ukrainian (FMRPC 2023) and Palestinian-Israeli (MFA 2023) conflicts. Building on Chilton (2004: 79-82), we argue that two different strategies of persuasion are at work: the first is conditional ('if A, then B') and favours the use of goal-oriented (or circumstantial) necessity modals (such as *bìxū* 'to be necessary'), the second is based on rightness and morally connoted, relying on deontic modals (such as *yīng(gāi)* 'should'). Structured around twelve principles of international law, as outlined by the speaker Wang Wenbin (2023), the document on the Ukrainian crisis is permeated with deontic expressions, with only one circumstantial *bìxū*; in the brief document on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, only modals *yào* (3) and *yīnggāi* (1) are found. Through comparative analysis with speeches where *bìxū* is pervasive, we will show that (i) the argumentative structure is here anchored in "matters of principle" (Russian-Ukrainian) and "matters of urgency" (Palestinian-Israeli conflict) and that (ii) the difference between *bìxū* and *yīnggāi* does not lie solely in a different normative force (strong vs. weak); it refers to different motives (practical vs moral) that the speaker invokes to persuade the audience to prefer a given course of action.

Gabriele Tola (Sapienza University of Rome)

Travelogues and Geographical Treatises: Geography from Above and from Below in Late Qing and Republican China

Travelogues and geographical treatises composed in the late Qing and the Republican period are fundamental instruments for better understanding the process of exchanges of ideas and mutual representations between China and the West, especially after the period of critical transition epitomised by the failure of the modernisation process during the second half of the nineteenth century. The speech aims to demonstrate the significant role that travelogues and geographical treatises played in the formation of networks of exchanges between China and the West, considering two different approaches to the geographical representation: one from above, the other from below. The two texts considered as a case study are *Oumei manyou riji* 歐美漫遊日記 [*Diary of a Journey in Europe and the United States*], by Chen Yifu 陳一甫 (1869–1948) and his son Chen Dayou 陳達有 (unknown dates), and *Wuzhou tukao* 五洲圖考 [*An Exploration with Images of the Five Continents*], by Gong Chai 龔柴 (?–1914?), Xu Bin 許彬 (?–1899?), and Xu Li 徐勵 (1851–1932). Focusing on the role that their authors played in these exchanges between China and the West, the speech puts the two texts in the context of the relevant textual production in late Qing and Republican China. The speech also shows the function of both the textual agency and the epistemic community the authors were part of in generating and spreading "Western knowledge" in late Qing and Republican China.

Gabriele Tola (Sapienza University of Rome), Erica Cecchetti (Sapienza University of Rome), Mattia Marconi (University of Naples “L’Orientale”), and YA Chen (Tuscia University)

Brollo’s Dictionarium sinico-latinum: Lexicological Annotations and Disyllabic Words

The *Dictionarium sinico-latinum* (Chinese-Latin dictionary) by the Franciscan missionary Basilio Brollo (1648–1704) was highly praised as an essential instrument for the study of Chinese; the dictionary was deemed so important that projects to publish it were conceived but, after these plans failed, it was plagiarised in a revised form. There are two versions of the text, composed in 1694 and 1699, including an estimate of 7.000 and 9.000 characters. As explained in the preface to the 1694 dictionary, Brollo consulted a list of native dictionaries, composed by Chinese authors, and dictionaries compiled by other missionaries; the *Dictionarium sinico-latinum* is therefore a summa of lexicographical and lexicological efforts, as well as of the intercultural dialogue reflected in them. According to the research methods of missionary linguistics, the *Dictionarium sinico-latinum* can be considered an important annotation of linguistic information and an instrument for the interpretation of the Chinese lexicon. Given its purpose as an instrument of study of the Chinese language for Western scholars, it records lexicological innovations that are not present in contemporary printed texts. Based on the efforts of an ongoing PNRR PRIN project (CHIN-DICTIONARY - Brollo’s *Dictionarium sinico-latinum*: linguistic innovations, textual connections, and trans-cultural translation, CUP: B53D23029330001), the speaker will focus in particular on the examples listed in the entries of the dictionary, annotated for the most part only in romanised form, and the sources adopted by Brollo: the purpose of the speech is to provide a clearer lexicographical outlook of the period considered, and to demonstrate that a thorough study of the *Dictionarium sinico-latinum* can contribute to a better description of the lexicological peculiarities of the Chinese language of that time.

Benjamin K. Tsou (City University of Hong Kong/Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

Some Salient Trans-Millennial Developments in the Chinese Language and Chinese Society: The Big Data Approach

Global changes have accompanied the arrival of the new millennium. China has been very much involved with these epochal changes and the Pan-Chinese speech communities have been witness to the consequential developments such as to be found in economy, technology, military capability, and the well-being of the peoples. The rapid technological advances in the information age have also provided us with new means to examine the emergence of tangible and intangible cultural artifacts and salient events. In this paper, we propose to review some latitudinal and longitudinal developments by means of [LIVAC*](#), a 700-million-character Chinese corpus which draws on printed media materials from six Chinese speech communities since 1995 and so covers this critical period in contemporary Chinese history. It provides an uncommon window to explore the mutual relationships between language and their speakers embedded in the broader society and culture by looking at language use and use of language in the media. Our focus will range from the rise of tri-syllabic and portmanteau-like words to the significance of annual news-media rosters since 2001, ethnicity shift as well as technical and military enhancement in the context of cultural enrichment and through the innovative manipulation of linguistic devices such as metaphors neologisms, light verbs and subtle language change. The rise of contrastive trends also invites explanations and could shed light on the future of the Chinese society.

Jiahang YU and Christoph Anderl (Ghent University)

A Linguistic Study of the Donkey Mourning Text in Or. 8210/ S.1477

The Dūnhuáng manuscript Or.8210/S.1477, titled *Jilǐwén yīshǒu* 祭驢文一首 “An Essay on Mourning a Donkey,” was written by an obviously frustrated and impoverished scholar during the Late Tang Dynasty. The manuscript served as a tribute to his deceased donkey, a loyal companion who had accompanied him throughout all walks of life. In the Dūnhuáng manuscript, the poor scholar describes their joint journeys and experiences in a lively and witty way, reflecting upon the donkey’s trials and tribulations in life and expressing an everlasting sense of remembrance and appreciation for his companion. The manuscript adopts a semi-vernacular style remarkable for this period and genre, containing many colloquial words and phrases, thereby ensuring its accessibility to contemporary readers. The language of the text also conveys a strong sense of humor. In this research, we examine the Dūnhuáng manuscript from multiple linguistic perspectives, including genre features, syntactic constructions, as well as the author’s use of classical allusions. In our presentation we will firstly focus on the use of specific variant character forms that appear throughout the manuscript, and in the second part, we will provide an overview of particular syntactic constructions and colloquial expressions. This analytical approach will be the basis for determining an approximate date of the composition/copy of the text, as well as defining it vis-à-vis other types of memorial texts.

Yating YU (University of Florence)

Late Qing Grammar Books and the Interpretation of Chinese Language Learning: A Comparison of Hanwen jinxie 漢文進階 (Introduction to Literary Chinese and Huayan shijie 華言拾階 (Introduction to Spoken Chinese

During the period from the late 1910s to the 1950s, several Chinese grammar books were published in China. These included works by Henri Vetch and his French Bookstore Peking, as well as grammar books of Mandarin by James J. Brandt (1869-1944), a Russian sinologist who taught at the North China Union Chinese Language School (華北協和華語學校). The speaker examines two of Brandt's Chinese grammar books: *Hanwen jinxie* 漢文進階 (*Introduction to Literary Chinese*) and *Huayan shijie* 華言拾階 (*Introduction to Spoken Chinese*). The research focuses on Brandt's perception of Chinese language learning and the interpretation of its written and spoken peculiarities. The two texts demonstrate a deep understanding of both spoken and written Chinese, including writing examples, cultural teaching, and vocabulary selection, which are essential for effective teaching. It is worth noting that the role and function of Chinese as a foreign language since the 1910s are related to personal knowledge, social and educational environment, reflecting the characteristics and laws of the Chinese language and the teaching of the language during that time. The speaker will highlight the significant contribution of Brandt and his contemporaries to Chinese language education and their role in shaping the way the language is taught today.

Longyu ZHANG (Ghent University)

Research on the Grammaticalisation of Ningke 寧可 in Medieval Chinese

Ningke 寧可 is an important disyllabic marker in modern Chinese to express the speaker's personal preference between two given choices. It is acknowledged that disyllabification is one of the major features of Medieval Chinese, whereas monosyllable words were dominant in Old Chinese. *Ning*, which already appeared in the pre-Qin dynasty (before 221 BCE), was an adverb denoting rhetorical questions or expressing one's firm attitude as modal marker. *Ke* was originally a full verb meaning "approve" and developed into an epistemic modal maker in late Old Chinese. Scholars have noticed that since the Yuan dynasty these two words had fused into one disyllabic function word that marked the comparison between the two clauses connected by it. However, little research has delved into the grammaticalization process of *ningke* because of the focus on its usage in modern Chinese. Relevant Medieval Chinese texts have only attracted minimal attention and scholarly interest. *Ke*, in particular, has not been properly analyzed in this construction, and treated as a suffix of *ning* without an own semantic function. When was the fusion of the two words lexicalized? How did their semantics develop and was encapsulated in the disyllabic function word? This research aims to answer these neglected questions by analyzing *ningke* in Medieval Chinese texts, with particular attention to translated Buddhist texts, such as the *Sifen lu* 四分律 (*Four-part Vinaya*), where *ning* and *ke* coappear in non-comparative contexts and *ke* still functions as an epistemic modal marker



CHINESE AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

CHINESE AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

Bianca Basciano, Marco Casentini and Alessia Iurato (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Investigating Chinese Resultative Verb Compounds in the Written Output of L1 Italian Learners: Preliminary Results

Mandarin Chinese makes extensive use of resultative verb compounds (RVCs), which can be divided into: (i) change-of-state RVCs (CoS, e.g. 踢破 *tī-pò* 'kick-break'); (ii) RVCs containing phase complements (PCs; e.g. 学完 *xué-wán* 'study-finish'); (iii) 'prepositional' RVCs, in which the second element is a preposition-like item (e.g. 放在桌子上 *fàng-zài zhuōzhuāngshàng* 'put on the table'). It has been observed that resultatives are probably the most difficult category of compounds for L2/FL Chinese learners to acquire (see Yu 2003, Zhang 2014), due to their complexity from both a morpho-syntactic and semantic point of view. RVCs are particularly challenging for Italian learners due to the typological distance between the two languages (Talmy 2000). In this talk, we aim to observe the linguistic performance of L1 Italian learners and to answer the following research question: are there any differences in the production of different types of RVCs? To this end, we administered a written production task (i.e., a narrative video description task) to university students at the intermediate level and to a control group of Chinese native speakers. Preliminary results show that L1 Italian learners of L2 Chinese do not show significant difficulties in producing prepositional resultatives. However, when it comes to CoS resultatives or PCs, they often do not produce resultatives (cf. control group). Furthermore, it seems that learners produce more 'target-like' CoS resultatives than PCs. This suggests an understanding of the constructional mechanisms of this type of resultatives, which are more compositional in meaning than PCs, whose meaning must primarily be memorized.

CAI Zong-qi (Lingnan University/University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

Striving to Revolutionise the Teaching and Learning of Chinese Literature and Language: An Ever-expanding Publishing and Media Project

This paper presents the highlights and achievements of the multiple phases of this decades-long project. Phase I is the publication of the How to Read Chinese Poetry anthologies and language texts (a three-book set) by Columbia University Press. Phase II is an outgrowth of the poetry series into the Columbia University ten-book series "How to Read Chinese Literature." Phase III is the production and broadcast of the 54-episode English podcast entitled *How to Read Chinese Poetry.* Phase IV is the production and broadcast of the Chinese video series *The Creative Vision of Tang Poetry.* The total views of the podcast and video series exceed 2 million. The paper ends with a brief description of the next three phases under preparation. This multi-phase project aims to break down four major barriers — separating teaching from research, literary studies from language learning, English translations from Chinese originals, and sense from sounds (prosody) — that have long impeded the teaching of Chinese literature and language in the English worlds. The paper will assess the successes and remaining challenges in our endeavours to break down these four barriers.

Federica Casalin (Sapienza University of Rome)

Tailoring a "Canon" that Values Language Skills in Teaching Pre-Modern Literature

Non-native speakers whose language proficiency ranges from A2 to B2 levels of the CEFR make up the majority of Chinese literature students enrolled in bachelor's programs in Italian universities; only a tiny percentage of them have studied Chinese at school according to the national syllabus introduced in 2016 and thus have some basic knowledge of the history of Chinese literature and have read a small selection of original texts (Tang and Song poetry). In light of this, university courses in pre-modern Chinese literature (ranging from 45 to 90 hours over three years) present numerous problems. One of them is to help students grasp an intimidatingly long literary history while maintaining direct contact with the literary pieces that form its foundation, despite the evident limits of language skills. Considering the linguistic and cultural value of literary texts and their motivational potential, this paper proposes to prioritise a direct approach to (portions of) original texts and to adopt a learner-centred inductive method as a possible way to overcome some difficulties in teaching Chinese literature. This approach is intended to provide students with a grasp of pre-modern literary history while also promoting lexical acquisition and stimulating awareness of the divide between spoken and written forms of Chinese. The complexity of constructing "a targeted canon" that values and strengthens language abilities without ignoring "the Canon," will be investigated, along with some opportunities resulting from the careful blending of authentic texts and translated versions.

Pi-Chun CHOU (Jagellonian University)

Enhancing Chinese-Polish Interpreter Training: Insights from Chinese-English Interpreting Strategies

Simultaneous interpreting presents numerous challenges, including limited time for sentence processing, simultaneous listening and speaking. Beyond these general hurdles, each language pair introduces its own specific challenges. Simultaneous interpreters develop language-pair-specific strategies to navigate these difficulties. While the Chinese-English language pair has garnered considerable research attention, Chinese-Polish interpreting has been relatively understudied. My paper aims to address this gap, particularly concerning the training of Polish students aspiring to become interpreters. Establishing an effective training program requires an understanding of the language-pair-specific strategies used in Chinese-Polish interpreting. To initiate this exploration, it is crucial to identify which strategies proposed by researchers in Chinese-English interpreting can be applied to Chinese-Polish interpreting. This paper focuses on the analysis of students' interpretations during practice sessions, specifically examining the challenges posed by different sentence structures. By identifying recurring mistakes in the recorded interpretations, I aim to pinpoint the types of sentences that present the greatest challenges to students. Subsequently, I will conduct an analysis to determine the applicability of common strategies proposed in various Chinese-English interpreting textbooks (such as various methods aimed at minimizing linear dislocation) to enhance the performance of Chinese-Polish interpreting students.

Davide Francolino (University for Foreigners of Siena) and CAOWen (Beijing Language and Culture University)

Prosodic Challenges in L2 Mandarin: A Preliminary Investigation among Italian Learners

The traditional method of Chinese phonetic instruction has long focused primarily on the acquisition of isolated word tones, unfortunately overlooking crucial suprasegmental elements such as prosody and natural speech patterns (Yang 2016). This oversight has led to a notable gap in the development of students' connected speech production, as well as their proficiency in intonation and rhythm (Trísková 2017). The persistence of this issue can also be attributed to the scarcity of research on L2 Mandarin prosodic production, further hindering a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies involved (Yang 2020). The study investigates the prosodic aspects of L2 Mandarin pronunciation among intermediate-level Italian university learners. Focused on minimal prosodic units, i.e., disyllabic phrases, the analysis considers participants' audio recordings of short dialogues including diverse target phrases, encompassing both local variations (e.g., sandhi) and global variations (e.g., contrastive focus) influencing the intonational realization (Wu 2004; Cao 2010). The author employed a dual-tiered approach, incorporating pitch-contour analysis of L1 and L2 productions and a perceptual test as an auditory decision task with native informants. Preliminary results show that participants encounter challenges such as tone-intonation interference, missing intonational information, and incorrect focus information, deviating from native prosodic strategies and hindering comprehension. Preliminary findings suggest that while learners may grasp tonal combinations at a lexical level, challenges persist in contextual phrase production. Deepening the analysis of L2 Mandarin prosodic production is crucial to addressing teaching challenges and positively impacting tone instruction and acquisition.

Andreas Guder and Andrea Frenzel (Free University of Berlin)

Is the Writing of 150 Different Characters a Communicative Task? A Critical Survey on Chinese Language Courses at Universities Outside Chinese Studies/Sinology

Starting from the wider discussion in Germany about a definition of "China Competence" deemed essential for any European society engaging with China, this survey project (executed in January 2024) marks the first focused exploration of Chinese language modules outside of sinology departments. Such modules are offered at more than 100 universities (language centers and China centers) across the German speaking area. Acknowledging that these courses are often underfinanced and instructors are compensated on an hourly basis, the survey inquired about fundamental parameters. These encompassed the scope of language programs, recent developments in demand, intended learning objectives (including CEFR levels, if applicable), textbooks used, digital support and methods of success monitoring. On a broader scale, the survey also delved into the relevance and demand for sociocultural knowledge and intercultural competences related to China and the Chinese-speaking world. Additionally, it explored specific challenges and issues faced by the courses in their current form. The results of the survey are intended to serve as a starting point for considerations on how courses on China and the Chinese language, designed for a wider range of students of all subjects, could better address specific needs of target groups. Furthermore, the findings aim to lay the groundwork for the development of a new generation of modules focusing on "Chinese-plus-China" competence. These modules are envisioned to cater to young academics and university staff expected to collaborate with Chinese institutions across various academic levels.

Carmen Lepadat (Roma Tre University)

The Acquisition of Mandarin Directional Verbal Compounds: State of the Art, Critical Issues, and Implications for Chinese L2 Teaching

Directional verbal compounds (DVCs) encode motion events – whether literal or figurative – whose result is the position reached by the moving entity or figure. DVCs have been included among resultative compounds by authors such as Li & Thompson (1981), albeit the existence of syntactic differences such as the possibility of inserting aspectual markers or locative/direct objects within the compound (Lin & Peck 2011). Both the semantic and syntactic/pragmatic characteristics of directionals represent some of the most complex aspects of Chinese linguistics, posing considerable challenges to their acquisition by non-Sinitic learners (Zhang 2014). This contribution consists of a critical analysis of the main studies on the acquisition of DVCs by Chinese L2/LS learners produced so far. Starting from error analysis studies in the 1980s (e.g., Yang 2003), passing through experimental studies within China and abroad during the past two decades (e.g., Wu 2011), and extending to recent usage-based studies (He 2022), the most important findings will be discussed, including the definition of specific acquisition sequences and the description of the most frequent errors produced by learners depending on their proficiency level. Critical issues for learners with different L1 backgrounds will also be outlined, such as the position of the direct object, the aspectual marker *le* 了, and the (insufficient) knowledge of the syntactic and semantic restrictions operating in DVCs. Finally, based on evidence from the acquisition literature analysis, a number of implications will be drawn both with respect to Talmy (2000)'s typology of motion events and concerning DVC teaching and learning.

Laura Locatelli and Alessia Iurato (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

The Acquisition of Chinese 被 bèi Passive Construction by Italian Learners of L2 Chinese: Combining Experimental and Introspective Data

The Chinese 被 *bèi* passive construction (BPC) poses challenges for L1 Italian learners of L2 Chinese due to its different syntactic and semantic features compared to Italian passive sentences (Sansò 2011). While extensively examined in L2 research (Liu 2016), no study has explored its acquisition by L1 Italian learners. In this talk, we focus on the BPC (张三被(我)打了 *Zhāngsān bèi (wǒ) dǎ le* 'Zhangsan was hit (by me)', Kong 2014), by investigating the acquisition of its semantic features, aiming to observe whether Italian learners have knowledge of its correct semantic value. We adopted a multi-method approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of learner data from different perspectives (Mackey & Bryfonski 2018). We combined experimental data to study learners' comprehension of the semantic meaning of the BPC with introspective data to observe learners' meta-knowledge of this construction. Participants completed three written experimental tasks (Acceptability Judgement Test, Pragmalinguistic Judgement Test, Sentence Selection Task). Verbal reports were then used to encourage participants to reflect on previous task decisions (Bowles 2018). Data were collected from 69 L1 Italian university learners (intermediate and advanced levels) and 11 L1 Chinese speakers for comparative purposes. Data provide converging evidence that learners struggle to recognize the semantic features of the BPC (cf. control group). However, introspective data reveal that advanced learners have a greater meta-knowledge of its semantic value. We propose that L1 transfer supports the Interface Hypothesis (Sorace & Filiaci 2006), highlighting the challenge posed by the syntax-semantics interface for learners.

Tommaso Pellin and Yedi YU (University of Bologna)

The Impact of China's Language Plans onto Chinese Heritage Schools in Italy

The government of People's Republic of China has devoted a large amount of resources in the last decades to design wide language plans and to implement relevant policies devoted to the overseas Chinese. Not only the teaching of the language to overseas Chinese has been hugely debated in academic and non-academic realms; the Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau (Qiaoban) and the Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (Qiaolian), in the last years, have actively funded universities, summer camps, schools and scholarships in China to support the teaching of Chinese in overseas schools, founded by some members of the local Chinese communities, where Chinese is taught as heritage language. Qiaolian has also devoted resources and implemented plans directly towards the *huawen xuexiao* (Chinese heritage language schools) abroad. *Huawen xuexiao* appear to be one of the most powerful tool for spreading not only the knowledge of language but also the knowledge of Chinese culture abroad. Italy hosts a relevant number of *huawen xuexiao* all over the country, but the impact of Chinese plans and policies about language may vary according to the size and degree of the development of the school, as well as according to some geographical features. The PRIN 2022 PNRR project entitled: ECCO-Italy, Education of Children of Chinese Origin in Italy, is the Italian government-funded project whose aim is, in particular, at assessing the effective relationships between these schools and Qiaoban and Qiaolian, the participation to their activities, the employment of their teaching material and the loyalty to their guidelines. The present contribution will report the scientific basis of the project as well as some preliminary results.

Cristina Caterina Rambaldini and Enrica Peracin (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)

Literature, Movies and TV Dramas: Developing Communicative Competence by Integrating Language and Culture in CFL Education at University Level

The relationship between language and culture is widely recognized. Due to their inextricably intertwined link (Brody 2003 in Xing 2006), they have been considered as the two sides of the same coin also in second language classroom (Brooks 1968; Tang 2006). To obtain the so called “communicative competence,” the study of the language is not enough; culture must be an essential part of foreign language study (Singermann 1988 in Wong 2008). Literature, as well as cinema and TV dramas, are with no doubt components of a culture, and thus can be effective tools to integrate language and culture study (Maugeri 2021). That language teaching and culture teaching cannot be separated has gradually been accepted also in the field of CFL education (Orton & Scrimgeour 2019). Culture helps learners develop their intercultural communicative competence (Zhang 2022), a skill required to be effective communicators. This paper investigates how literature, movies, and TV dramas in original language can be employed in a laboratory course on Chinese Literature for Chinese mother tongue and Italian intermediate university learners of Chinese. The purpose is to shed light on the possibility to effectively integrate language and culture teaching in CFL education to develop students' communicative competence (Danison 2013). In addition to literature, which has been extensively used, TV dramas and movies have increasingly become effective tools for second language learning due to their ability to engage students (Gabbianelli 2020; Pai & Duff 2020). The study will present empirical evidence supporting the benefits of linking literature with media productions from the perspective of CFL education.

Francesca Restucci (University of Bologna)

Italian Cultural References in Chinese Subtitling: Professional and Non-Professional Translations in the TV Series “L'amica geniale” (My Brilliant Friend)

Awarded “best foreign TV series” at the Shanghai Television Festival in 2020, the Italian TV series “L'amica geniale” (My Brilliant Friend) is gaining huge popularity among the Chinese audience. Translated from English as pivotal language, its official subtitles seem not to be fully appreciated, the main complains being plot cuts due to the restrictions on the import of foreign contents and the wrong translation of some Italian cultural references. What seems to guarantee the success of the series in China are instead its five non-official and non-professionally translated versions, which instead seem to be made directly from Italian. This contribution aims therefore to shed light on the difficulties encountered by the Chinese official audiovisual translation market in translating Italian cultural references and compare them with the translation choices adopted instead by the non-professional translators, commonly known as fansubbers. The study is based on the triangulation of: 1) a qualitative contrastive analysis of the translation of cultural references in all the versions considered, based on previous studies taxonomies and categorization systems (Molina 2006; Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007, 2021; Pedersen 2011; Ranzato 2016); 2) n(ethnographic) data (Kozinets 2010) collected via semi-structured interviews with the translators involved and focus groups with some audience's samples, aimed at testing the audience perception of the translations analyzed. This contribution will present the preliminary results of a reflection on the potential chances in introducing Italian culture into China represented by the amateur translators in comparison with the issues characterizing the official market instead.

Stephen Roddy (University of San Francisco)

Multilingual Pedagogies for Chinese Literature

Multilingual pedagogies for Chinese literature Teaching Chinese literary texts “multilingually” has been attempted in the US at least since the 1960s, when UC Berkeley’s introductory literary Chinese course began to allow students with diverse modern language competencies—Standard Chinese (Putonghua), Cantonese, Japanese, and Korean—to read and engage in classical texts in and from their respective vernacular traditions. In recent years, with the ethnic and linguistic diversification of student populations across the US, possibilities for such experimentation have only grown. Yet while Chinese literature courses typically attract a mix of native, heritage, and non-native speakers and learners, the professoriate has generally been slow to productively exploit these trends. In this presentation, I will draw on four decades of experience teaching literature in Korea, Taiwan, and the US, providing examples of multilingual accommodations that encourage participatory, interactive student engagement and enhance language acquisition and proficiency. On the theoretical plane, such pedagogies can be informed by the recognition of cognitive pluriversality as a foundation for reorganizing education writ large, as well as of the opportunities that arise with the decline of Anglophonic hegemony in both core and peripheral regions. (Mignolo 2018)

Han WANG (University of Bologna)

Teaching Chinese-Italian Dialogue Interpreting to Undergraduate Students with Chinese as a Foreign Language: Experience and Challenges

Dialogue interpreting (DI) generally indicates conversation-like interactions mediated by interpreters. Unlike conference interpreter training delivered at the postgraduate level, in Italy, DI courses have been increasingly encompassed in BA programmes. However, limited research and materials have addressed the development of DI competence in learners with Chinese as a foreign language. This study presents the preliminary pedagogical experience from a Chinese-Italian DI course delivered in 2023 to third-year undergraduate students with Chinese as their second foreign language. The learning activities were organized in a paired-week format: in the first week, the vocabulary and texts around the interpreting topic were introduced to the students through frontal lectures. In the following week, namely the DI session week, the students were asked to facilitate the conversations between an Italian and a Chinese-speaking instructor; both were provided with scripts to ensure the smooth unfolding of the interaction. During such role-play exercises, some critical aspects regarding context-based language proficiency and intercultural pragmatics emerged, such as word order, sentence cohesion, and forms of politeness. Thanks to these findings, the role-play scripts were revised and re-proposed for the same DI course started in February 2024. Upon students’ consensus, their performance was video-recorded. The outcome of the analysis will be presented as an integration into this study to provide further insights into DI training with Chinese as a foreign language.

Kathleen Wittek (Free University of Berlin)

Exploring the Role of Literature in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

As language teaching has shifted from a rather scholarly approach to a more pragmatic one, reading Chinese literature doesn’t seem to be the focus of language acquisition. That trend may have been accelerated by difficulties arising from the sinographic system which prevents a quick pace of literacy acquisition. Studying a modern language generally means first developing learners’ functional ability to communicate their everyday needs, thoughts, and feelings in interpersonal contexts. But that needn’t be contradictory to engaging with literature as it offers a chance to develop students’ ability to change perspective and thus their ability to empathize with people from different walks of life. By engaging with the literature of foreign countries, cultures, languages and times, the understanding of other lifestyles and developments is promoted and contributes to the education of cosmopolitanism and a constructive approach to diversity. The resulting differentiated and critical reflection on one’s own and others’ needs and demands promotes the acquisition of intercultural and transcultural communication skills. This paper explores the feasibility of reading complex novels in Chinese language lessons at school and university and how it can enhance students’ literacy level when developing their communicative skills.

Zuzanna Wnuk (Adam Mickiewicz University)

The Development of Metalinguistic Orthographic Knowledge of the Chinese Writing System and Its Implications on Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

Three critical aspects of metalinguistic orthographic awareness of the Chinese writing system can be identified, namely graphemic awareness (concerning structural relationships between strokes, components, and elements), grapho-morphemic awareness (how a Chinese character and its parts connect with meaning), and grapho-phonetic awareness (how a Chinese character and its parts connect with pronunciation). The development trends various aspects of metalinguistic orthographic awareness were investigated during a study conducted over period of three years on learners of Chinese as a foreign language coming from an alphabetic background with the use of a prepared metalinguistic orthographic test. The aforementioned aspects of metalinguistic orthographic awareness have been confirmed to possess different development trends – the graphemic awareness starts to develop first and the development rate is rather quick; grapho-morphemic awareness development progression begins after the basic levels of graphemic awareness are established; grapho-phonetic awareness development starts relatively late and its progress is the slowest. On the basis of the study results, a new model for processing Chinese characters in context of Chinese as a foreign language has been proposed. It is adaptable to different stages of metalinguistic orthographic awareness development. Moreover, the implications of study findings for teaching practices are discussed, including the suggested teaching content at different learning stages divided into declarative and procedural knowledge that should be mastered by the learners, as well as types of exercises that support the development of metalinguistic orthographic awareness taking into consideration the needs, abilities and knowledge of the learners.



LITERATURE (PREMODERN)

LITERATURE (PREMODERN)

Rubén Almendros (INALCO, Paris)

A Horde of Reformed Bandits: Crossroads Between Shuihu zhuan and the Tiandihui Uprising of 1802 in the Early Nineteenth-Century Novel Shenlou zhi

Shenlou zhi 蜃樓志 (*The Pavilion of Mirages*, 1804), the sole Chinese novel depicting trade with Europeans in the international port of Canton in the early 19th century, receives commendation in its preface for its meticulous portrayal of “Guangdong’s local landscape.” However, the historical narrative swiftly transitions from the demise of the chief merchant Su Wankui 蘇萬魁 in the eighth chapter to a novel of worldly affairs, characterised by a proliferation of intertextuality. One of *Shenlou zhi*’s primary fictional sources, *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳, predominantly outlines a military plot led by Yao Huowu 姚霍武 and his ‘brothers.’ This storyline closely mirrors the Liangshan 梁山 bandit group, reproducing well-known episodes such as the “Wu Song Fights the Tiger” tale. Indeed, although the uprising seems reminiscent of the historical rebellions of the Heaven and Earth Society (Tiandihui 天地會) in the prefectures of Huizhou and Chaozhou in 1802, the denouement of *Shenlou zhi* is visibly closer to *Shuihu zhuan*: the group of bandits ends up joining the imperial army to defeat a greater threat, Mola 摩刺, a fake barbarian monk who has taken Chaozhou and masters magical battle formations (*zhen* 陣). In our general discussion on intertextuality, this could denote an ‘anxiety of precedents’ (Huang 1990) which would make the author move away from the initial emphasis on regional characteristics.

Severina Balabanova (National Sun Yat-sen University)

Representation of Aquatic Animals in the Tang Literary Encyclopedia Fundamentals of Learning (Chuxue ji 初學記)

Broad learning (*bowu xue* 博物學) in medieval China is a complex concept encompassing knowledge dispersed in various types of texts and epistemic traditions. Its scope includes, but is not limited to, the study of species, ways of their description, levels of their significance and the question of their perception and representation in literary and religious works. The Tang Dynasty (618-907) saw the compilation of a number of literary encyclopedia in which existing knowledge was organized in numerous subjects drawing from a variety of textual sources, with a lot of its subject-matter relating to broad learning. The selection and organization of the material reflects the ways people thought of broad learning at that time. My paper studies the section on aquatic animals (*linjie bu* 鱗介部) in the Tang encyclopedia *Fundamentals of Learning (Chuxue ji 初學記)* and focuses on the definition, the types and the explanation of the species included in it. It examines the ways they are narrated by examining the overall composition and the structure of the section, the texts, and the interaction between the different literary genres to which they belong, which on the one hand exemplifies memory about the species and on the other hand demonstrates how they are re-imagined. The paper will make some suggestions about specifics of perception and methods of textual representation of this type of species, analyze their significance within the framework of broad learning, while drawing on cognitive literary criticism.

Marie Bizais-Lillig (University of Strasbourg)

Scholarship Transmission from the Tang: Authority and Standards

The *Maoshi Zhengyi* 毛詩正義 [*Righteous Meaning of the Poems in the Mao Tradition*] compiled under the direction of Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) stands nowadays as a cornerstone for the study of the Confucian Classic. However, the work’s status is mainly associated with the fact that it provides a version of the text that is considered a reference, and that it transmits the fundamental so-called Mao 毛 commentaries along with Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127-200). This paper argues that, if later editions and commentaries never reached the historical and philological importance of the *Maoshi Zhengyi*, it is due the textual carefulness and the intellectual rigor of Kong Yingda and his team’s work. Quotes from literati who commented upon the Poems will help demonstrate that the *Maoshi Zhengyi*, despite its limits, was consistently set as a model. Meticulous attention will be paid to the *Kanzheng jiujing sanzhuang yange li* 刊正九經三傳沿革例 [*Cases to Illustrate the History of the Emendation of the Nine Classics and Three Traditions*] in one roll, attributed to Yue Ke 岳珂 (n.d.) and said to date back to the Song dynasty (12th century), but which, according to recent scholarship, is most probably a work of the Yuan dynasty.

Massimiliano Canale (University of Naples “L’Orientale”)

What the Masters Did Not Translate: The First Anthologies of Chinese Song Lyrics in English Translation

Although the early efforts at translating Chinese poetry into Western languages date back to the 18th century, the first translated anthologies of song lyrics (*ci*) would only appear approximately two hundred years later. The peculiarities of *ci* and the perception of its lesser importance in the tradition compared to classical poetry (*shi*) certainly played a role in determining this delay. If Judith Gautier included six *ci* poems in her 1902 edition of *Le livre de jade*, well into the 20th century a master of Chinese poetry translation such as Arthur Waley, commenting on the song lyrics, ungenerously observed that “it is obvious that they are unsuitable for translation, since their whole merit lies in metrical dexterity.” It shouldn’t be surprising, then, that nobody – to my knowledge – chose to publish a whole book devoted to this poetic genre in English until the 1930s, when Clara M. Candlin’s *The Herald Wind* (1933) and Ch’u Ta-kao’s *Chinese Lyrics* (1937) appeared. My paper aims to investigate the historical and cultural context and the authors’ personal circumstances that resulted in the emergence of these pioneering translations, and to assess their contribution to the circulation of the Chinese song lyric in the West. In particular, I will explore the connections of these works with the re-evaluation of *ci* that had been underway in China for some years as a result of the literary revolution that began in the 1910s. In this respect, I will examine Candlin’s indebtedness to Hu Shi’s recent *Selection of Song Lyrics* (*Ci xuan*, 1927).

Lin CHEN (Aix-Marseille University)

From Poetry to Painting: Exploring the Yijing 意境 in Wang Wei’s Landscape Poems

The *Ars Poetica* by Horace introduces an analogy between painting and poetry: *ut pictura poesis*. Likewise, in China, a similar perspective has developed, carrying an intrinsic distinctiveness specific to the poetry and pictorial art of the Orient. During the Tang Dynasty, considered the golden age of Chinese poetry, landscape poetry experienced its zenith. Wang Wei 王維 (701-761), with his freshness, natural simplicity, and refinement, emerged as its foremost representative. His poems are enriched with pictorial elements, musicality, and the influences of Buddhist and Taoist philosophies. In the subsequent Song Dynasty, the eminent literatus Su Shi (1037-1101) expressed: “When I savor a poem by Wang Wei, I find a painting; when I contemplate a painting by Wang Wei, I find a poem.” This testimony has endured through the ages. Indeed, Wang Wei was not only an accomplished poet but also a proficient painter and musician. How these correspondences between these distinct art forms manifest in his works? This study seeks to comprehend “painting in poetry” in Wang Wei’s landscape poems from the perspective of Chinese pictorial art theory, with a specific emphasis on Yijing 意境. The research focuses on several of Wang Wei’s landscape poems as its corpus to elucidate the significant features of “painting in poetry.” Drawing upon concepts from classical Chinese painting theory such as *qi* 氣, *yun* 韻, *liubai* 留白, and the method of the three “distant views” 三遠法, it aims to reveal how Wang Wei creates a poetic landscape with Yijing 意境, where the intersection of human emotions and the natural world transcends mere description.

Yulia Dreyzis (Lomonosov Moscow State University)

Russian Renditions of Classical Chinese Poetry: Paradoxes of Non-Translations

Russian translators have been deeply interested in classical Chinese poetry for over a century, since the publication of the first collection with a wide selection of poems for Russian readers in 1914. This contribution offers a new perspective on the subject by exploring the concept of non-translation. Paradoxically, the attempt to expand readership relies in many cases on the strategy of non-translation that captures the most content-laden elements of the poem, which in the original serve as a sign of the otherness of the cultural tradition correlated with the text. In this sense, non-translation has a performative nature, since its very production emphasizes the critical differences and boundaries between linguistic and cultural traditions. Through an analysis of translational representations by Alekseev, Gitovich, Shchutsky, Toroptsev and other scholars, we are able to observe the problem of addressing the “general reader,” as most often the translation is more directed than the original text.

Francesca Fariello (University of Naples “L’Orientale”)

Greek and Hellenistic World in the Mirror of Cultural Heritage Perception in Chinese Sources

The perception of the Greek and Hellenistic world’s cultural heritage in China is comparable to an infinite number of pieces of a mosaic that, taken together, constitute the image that China began to construct of the West from the first contacts that, only from 139-138 BC with the first diplomatic missions of Zhang Qian 張騫, emissary of the emperor Han Wudi 漢武帝, took an official form. In the Song era, appeared a number of narratives, related to the territories and monuments of the marvellous West; Chinese explorers annotated in their travel diaries the reflection of the West. Later, the direct dissemination carried out by the Jesuit missionaries helped to restore the tradition of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the classical Greek and Roman world. It was in this way that all this information flowed into a number of Chinese encyclopaedias, contributing to the dissemination in China of the image of the Greek and Hellenistic world, which were sometimes literally sketched by the illustrations that accompanied the stories and descriptions of the western classical world. The paper aims to illustrate some cases of the reception of Greek and Hellenistic cultural heritage, in particular, two monuments considered part of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the Lighthouse of Alexandria and the Colossus of Rhodes, through a comparative analysis of Chinese sources and the “sources of the Chinese sources”: the Greek and Roman sources, which constituted the first bibliography of Chinese narratives about the West.

Lionel Sven Fothergill (University of Zurich)

How to Wage War in Shuihu: Magic on the Battlefield

The *Shuihu zhuan* 水浒传 (*Water Margin*) has been read as a manual for guerilla warfare, although not covering most pertinent issues. Instead, sorcerers, divine intervention, and cosmology are decisive in about half of the engagements. These were both a commercial turned aesthetic strategy to entertain and an explanatory instrument to narrate events alien to the audience. The *jiugong bagua zhen* 九宫八卦阵 (chapter 76) is but one example of cosmological framing of battle presented in ritualistic language in the *Shuihu zhuan*. Song Jiang’s 宋江 use of this formation as well as help from Jiutian Xuannü 九天玄女 hint at the trans-textual nexus of association between military secret knowledge and Daoist teachings. A second feature are magic duels described vividly at pivotal moments on the battlefield, e.g. against the warlock Gao Lian 高廉 (chapters 52 and 54). The respective TV adaptations of this passage are informative of contemporary secularizations of the story. In Chen Min’s 陈敏 *Shuihu renwuzhi* 水浒人物志 (*Biographies of the Water Margin*, 1980s), magic is rationalized as terror tactics with pyrotechnics. In Zhang Shaolin’s 张绍林 *Shuihu zhuan* (1998), Gao’s spells are excluded due to the adaptation’s Materialist worldview. In Kuk Kwok-leung’s *Xin Shuihuzhuan* 新水浒传 (*All Men Are Brothers*, 2011), religious symbolism resurfaces but has become unintelligible and is reframed as superstition.

Valentin Guichard (INALCO, Paris)

Gender and the Female Stage – The Motif of Cross-Dressing in Two Late Imperial Chinese Plays Written by Women

This paper examines the pattern of female-to-male cross-dressing (*nü ban nanzhuang* 女扮男裝) as it appears in two early nineteenth-century Chinese plays written by female playwrights, namely *Qiaoying* 喬影 (*The Image in Disguise*) by Wu Zao 吳藻 and *Lihua meng* 梨花夢 (*The Pear Blossom Dream*) by He Peizhu 何珮珠. After pointing out several elements that attest to the autobiographical dimension of their works, as previous research has shown (HUA Wei 2003), I explain how and why these women chose to represent their alter egos on stage in a man's apparel. Drawing on Butler's theory, I argue that both plays demonstrate the performativity of gender, which is further emphasized by the literary genre to which they belong; their reflection on the themes of gender and identity, I also claim, may in turn shed light on their authors' very conceptions of drama.

Alison Hardie (University of Leeds)

Ruan Dacheng's Women: A Case-Study in 17th-Century Dramatic Representation of Women

Despite the fame of Ruan Dacheng 阮大鍼 (1587-1646) as a late-Ming dramatist, his plays have received little scholarly attention, and are primarily examined for their supposed political significance. Ruan's extensive corpus of poetry has very little reference to women, apart from a couple of poems on the death of his mother and a few other examples, e.g. one addressed to the famous courtesan Gu Mei 顧媚. However, as a leading dramatist of the generation after Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖, Ruan was clearly interested in the on-stage portrayal of individual psychology, of women as much as of men. I will discuss some examples of female characters from Ruan's four surviving plays – Wei Yingniang (*dan* 旦) and Mrs Yuwen (*laodan* 老旦) from *Spring Lantern Riddles* 春燈謎, Mrs Xiao (*dan*) and the acrobat Mrs Rui (*tiedan* 貼旦) from *The Sakyamuni Pearls* 牟尼合, Lu Ruoyu (*dan*) from *Double Examination Success* 雙金榜, and Li Feiyun (*dan*) and Hua Xingyun (*xiaodan* 小旦), as well as two comic characters, Drunkard Miu's wife and paramedic Mother Meng (both *chou* 丑), from *The Swallow Messenger* 燕子箋. I will argue not only that Ruan Dacheng's *dan* characters are quite distinct individuals and not just conventionally beautiful, virtuous, and cultivated young ladies, but that he has a particular interest in the sympathetic portrayal of mature women, which is an unusual and original feature of his work.

Beth Harper (The University of Hong Kong)

Delightful Leisure and Green Things: Poetic Portrayals of the Gardener in Comparative Perspective

Largely missing from the textual tradition prior to the eleventh century, in China the gardener becomes a figure of importance only from the Song onwards. A notable forerunner, however, may be found in the Tang essayist Liu Zongyuan's 柳宗元 (773–819 CE) allegorical biographical sketch of the gardener Guo Tuotuo 郭橐駝 ('Guo the Camel Back'). Signalling the Zhuangzian trope of physical deformities as signs of inner virtue and wisdom, the gardener's art of cultivating plants becomes an allegory for the arts of governance. The human desire for control of the more-than-human world must yield to the natural rhythms of things. In Augustan Rome, the poet Virgil (70-19 BCE) inserts a digression on the Corycian gardener into the last book of his *Georgics*, a poem seemingly extolling the virtue of *labor improbus* and the sturdy moral and cultural values of hard work. Isolated from political and social organization, the gardener presents that aspect of human nature which is private and individual and whose highest embodiment is the poet, or perhaps, the sage. In reading comparatively, I hope to show how two moments in these literary traditions demonstrate a shared lingering on the gardener as a figure who knows what it might mean to be properly alive and free. Set against the values of utility, service and violent subjugation of the natural world, these representations of the gardener, I suggest, transcend the values of Confucian or Augustan orthodoxy to question the limits of the political in human life.

Joanna Krenz (Adam Mickiewicz University)

Epistolary Translation: Daryl Lim Wei Jie's Lyrical Correspondence with Bai Juyi

In the proposed paper, I intend to discuss Daryl Lim Wei Jie's (b. 1990) experimental translations of the Tang-dynasty poet Bai Juyi. Lim, an English-speaking descendant of mainland-Chinese immigrants in Singapore, undertakes an imaginary letter exchange with the classical Chinese author, whose complex cultural identity, personal story, and artistic sensibilities extensively resonate with his own. In the course of this peculiar dialogue across the ages, in which the young poet guides his predecessor through the labyrinths of modernity, including popular culture, social media, political events, and negotiates translational solutions with him, nine renditions of Bai's verses into English emerge. Without departing significantly from literal meaning, Lim creatively plays with the texts' visual arrangement on the page, breaking the lines and inserting extensive blank spaces that enforce a more pensive reading. These ascetic compositions are meant to resist the hypervelocity and hypertrophy of the contemporary world. Originally published online in *Exchanges: Journal of Literary Translation*, the translations were subsequently incorporated in the poetry collection *Anything But Human* (2021) and interspersed with Lim's own works which portray the modern reality in a scathing but loving way, and collaborate towards what the author calls "resetting the world" after the postmodern failure of the conventional "postal principle" as the default mode of interpersonal and intertextual communication. In my analysis, I will approach Lim's translation as an artistic act, a step toward self-identification, a critical intervention, as well as an initial stage in the invention of an alternative transcultural social-ethical discourse, which attempts to steer away from the hegemonic mechanisms of symbolic violence, on the one hand, and dodges the syllogistic rhetoric and a self-looping blame game with victimhood as a bargaining card and cancel culture as an executive power, on the other.

Sara Landa (Heidelberg University)

Albert Ehrenstein's Poetry Translations and the German Reception of Chinese Poetry in the Early 20th Century

The expressionist poet Albert Ehrenstein (1886-1950) has not only (indirectly) translated or rewritten numerous Chinese poems, in particular by Li Bai, Du Fu and Bai Juyi. His engagement with Chinese poetry has profoundly shaped his own literary production, his reflection of aesthetic possibilities and of the role of the author in a society in an era of unrest, violence and transformation. Not being able to access Chinese poetry in the original language, he has worked with a variety of sources in German, English and French and has been in regular contact with Erwin von Zach, (sometimes contentious) scholar and meticulous translator of countless classical poems. In the way Ehrenstein experiments with Chinese poetry in quite different directions, both on the formal level and in his selection and treatment of themes and topoi, he reacts to different strands of reception of Chinese poetry that coexisted and often contended with each other during the European 'China Fever' in the early 20th century. The paper would thus like to situate Ehrenstein within the multifaceted discourse on China and Chinese poetry and show how his work attempts to explore the potential of different readings and approaches to Chinese poetry for his own time.

Jasmin Law (KU Leuven)

Invisible Ink: Reinventing the "Yue" Identity through the Local Tales of the Half-Human Half-fish luting

Legends concerning the half-human half-fish *luting* 盧亭 have been a common motif in literary works and cultural projects from Hong Kong's post-1997 era. The phenomenon is rooted in ever-adapting local tales of the native inhabitants of Lantau Island. In Chinese imperial narratives, the mythical character *luting* has different names and identities but usually serves as a blanket term for those sea-dwelling nomads who were remnants of rebel groups, naked, inked or with a mallet-shaped hairstyle. The physical markers—including tattoos—attributed to these "island barbarians" (*haidao yiren* 海島夷人) are tied to the invisible stereotype of the southerners who "sheared their hair and tattooed their bodies," thereby drawing self-other/Hua-Yi boundaries. By the Ming era, the *luting* people were vilified as sea monsters and even animalized as strange fish (*guai yu* 怪魚) who had lost their speech abilities and become a hybrid creature. Despite this prevailing prejudice, the Panyu-native literatus Qu Dajun (1630–1690) wrote a poem tracing the histories of the silenced *luting* people and praised their Yue identity as being sons of the dragon. Unraveling the diverse legends of the *luting* people, this paper seeks to reveal how the islanders were perceived and portrayed, from sea barbarians to marine animals, both through the imperial lens and in terms of self-identification. This paper adopts a non-sinocentric perspective to explore how the mythologization of "uncivilized" islanders, the retelling of local tales and the reinvention of local identity factors into the long-standing center-periphery tensions.

Yizhuo LI (University of Cambridge)

Sizhoucheng: Flood and Female Demon in Late Imperial China

Sizhoucheng 泗州城 is a mythological play performed in Qing Beijing, drawing inspirations from various local folklores surrounding the historical flood in the Sizhou City which was situated near the Huai River in Jiangsu. Constantly plagued by floods since medieval China, the city succumbed to complete submergence in 1680, attributed to sedimentation from the Yellow River. This study explores the dramatized portrayal of the Sizhou flood and its interplay with popular narratives in late imperial China. *Sizhoucheng* recounts the tale of the Water Mother (Shuimu 水母), who, enamored with a young scholar, falls victim to a swindling scheme involving her precious pearl. Seeking retribution, she inundates Sizhou City, only to be thwarted by Bodhisattva Guanyin and other deities. This literati drama synthesizes elements from the performance of the *White Snake* and *Xiyouji* 西遊記 narratives, condemning the female demon for flooding as a consequence of forbidden love with humans. However, some vernacular religious texts adapted the tragic ending into the salvation of the demon lover. This adaptation reveals people's compassionate perspective towards the demon's love within the context of the Ming-Qing cult of emotions, emphasizing an understanding of natural disasters as inevitable sufferings with explanations rooted in cause and effect, rather than attributing blame solely to a demonic entity.

LIU Chunxiao (University of Zurich)

Euphonic Finesse in Dù Fǔ's Poem Cycles

Dù Fǔ (712–770) is widely regarded as the most eminent poet in the history of classical Chinese literature who “achieved the supreme synthesis” (*jí dàchéng*) of poetic artistry. Despite the extensive research dedicated to studying his works, the exploration of the auditory craftsmanship in Dù Fǔ's poems has predominantly focused on tonal prosodic rules or has been inclined towards a “discourse-centered” approach, rather than a “verse-centered” one (Zhōu Shizhēn 1998). Given that the advancements in historical phonology have laid a firm foundation for fine-grained examinations into the phonic nuances of medieval Chinese poems (for previous attempts see Gāo Yōugōng / Méi Zǔlín 1968, Stimson 1969, Zhú Jiānín 2012), the current study investigates how the arrangement of sounds contributes to the coherence and expressiveness of poem cycles authored by Dù Fǔ. By focusing on selected poem cycles whose title suggests unique forms or modes of performance, such as *wǎngē cí* ‘dirges’ and *gē* ‘songs,’ it demonstrates that sound units and patterns serve as crucial poetic devices. They not only create euphonic effects and interact with semantic and syntactic structures but also provide a framework that unifies and connects individual poems within a cycle. The study highlights the potential of incorporating the phonic dimension into the investigation of medieval Chinese poems, whereby a deeper understanding of their aesthetic qualities can be achieved. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of treating a poem cycle as a cohesive unit during oral performances to fully appreciate the captivating auditory elements orchestrated by the poet.

Yangyang LIU (Sorbonne University)

A Friendship of 2000 Years – Reading Su Dongpo by French Poet Claude Roy

Since his youth, Claude Roy (1915-1997), a French poet and former Maoist, has harbored a love for Chinese culture. He discovered the poetry of Su Dongpo (1037-1101) during his trip to China in the 1950s and began translating his poetry, but it took over 40 years for *Friend Who Came from the Year Thousand* (*L'ami qui venait de l'an mil*, Gallimard, 1994) come to fruition. However, as the title suggests, the work is not a simple anthology of poems; it is a dialogue between two poets from different spatiotemporal spaces. Thus, we wonder: To what extent does Su Dongpo, a Chinese poet who walked the earth a thousand years ago, inspire Claude Roy, a contemporary French poet? To address the proposed issue, it would be interesting to first examine Roy's admiration for Su Dongpo's sensitivity to the ordinary things of daily life, which nevertheless form the core of existence. Secondly, we can delve into the dialogue between Su Dongpo's eventful life and the author's memories of the 1950s when he encountered this Chinese spirit. Lastly, one may consider that this dialogue spanning a thousand years enables Roy, a disillusioned former Maoist who doesn't conceal his sadness for a country he deeply loves, to rediscover the essence of its people that endures after the numerous social upheavals of the 20th century.

Clara Luhn (University of Munich)

He moshui 喝墨水: Forms of and Motivations Behind Ingesting Ink in Imperial China

In the contemporary Chinese language, if someone has “never drunk ink,” it means they are not particularly eloquent, probably uneducated, perhaps even completely illiterate. Someone who “drank ink for several years,” on the other hand, likely enjoyed a thorough education. Of course, such statements do not refer to the nutritional or calorific value of ink but rather to its cultural significance. They express the expectation that by ingesting the substance a person could acquire certain immaterial qualities closely associated with the material medium: erudition, eloquence, possibly even artistic esprit. Treating ink as a non-human actant that can develop its agency both inside and outside the human body, this paper explores the forms and motivations of ingesting ink and traces their presumed origins and development. It draws on textual sources spanning historiography, poetry, medical, and technical literature on ink, including colophons and anecdotes from individual authors from the early medieval period to the Qing. These sources report that ink was at times administered as a punitive measure in the context of state examinations, ingested in medical and therapeutic contexts, and, most importantly, consumed by artists to absorb the erudition and creativity associated with the material. By juxtaposing ink with beverages and bodily fluids, writers often blur and thereby question the boundaries between the internal and external, artist and world. Ultimately, ingesting ink is presented in these sources as contributing to the formation of individual and group identities.

Filippo Marsili (Saint Louis University)

The Huainanzi and the Notion of Creative Rulership: A Historical Perspective

This paper analyses the *Huainanzi* in the context of the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 141 – 87 BCE) and puts it in conversation with contemporary debates on the prerogatives of centralized rule. Customarily, scholarship on early China interprets the period considering the Confucian perspective of official historiography (i. e. the *Shiji* and especially the *Hanshu*). However, an analysis of Emperor Wu’s ritual activities shows that, in keeping with the archaeological finds in burials connected with members of the imperial Liu clan, he envisioned his function not as the mere reproduction of the past models celebrated in the Ru literary tradition, but as aligned with the creative forces of a dynamic cosmos. My paper argues that Emperor Wu’s reasons for promoting such a conception of rulership were not only intellectual. The ritual celebration of a sovereign who freely harnesses elemental energy to create a new cosmic order was instrumental to the legitimization of his centralizing policies that aimed at taking away the land and its resources from long-established local aristocratic lineages. As a case study, this paper focuses on the treatment of the cult of Taiyi in the *Huainanzi* vis-à-vis the *Shiji*, and the material evidence from Mawangdui. Paradoxically, Emperor Wu’s conflict with his cousin Liu An might also be interpreted in light of the cogent ritual and political vision of the *Huainanzi*—the question was who, within the Liu clan, had the power to realize it.

Jungwon MOON (Sungkyunkwan University)

Shiji zhuan’s (詩集傳) Intellectual and Literary Influence on Joseon

Joseon has shared many cultural exchanges with China dating back to the Ming and Qing era. This connection allowed writers in Joseon to explore the poetry and scriptures of the Joseon Dynasty. In Korea’s history of *Shijing*, the Joseon period formally initiated discussions around poetry. In the late Goryeo era, Zhu Xi’s *Shiji zhuan* (詩集傳) made its way to Joseon, generating significant interest. The swift acceptance of Zhu Xi’s teachings marked the rise of poetry and scripture as influential elements in Korean intellectual pursuits. Discussions on poetics focused on unraveling the intricacies of *Shiji zhuan* (詩集傳). Early in its foundation, the Joseon Dynasty embraced Confucianism as its national ideology, incorporating Goryeo’s scholastic traditions and literary aesthetics. Over 500 years, the parallel development of Confucianism and Chinese literature in Joseon mirrored trends in China. Monarchs like Sejong, through policies like Chongmun, fostered the emergence of erudite scholars, poets, and writers. Local educational institutions such as Hyanggyo, Seowon, and academies like Sungkyunkwan played pivotal roles in nurturing intellectual talent. Consequently, *Shiji zhuan* (詩集傳) became an integral classic in Korean cultural heritage. Exploring the position of the *Shiji zhuan* (詩集傳) in the Joseon Dynasty involves examining its contemporary context and reception during that period. Additionally, understanding how Korean scholars approached the study of the *Shiji zhuan* (詩集傳) and comparing specific terminologies used in related academic discussions is crucial. Korea’s academic platform often employs the keyword *Shiji zhuan* (詩集傳) in reference to works from some prominent scholars including Lee Sang-bong’s influential work on *Shiji zhuan* (詩集傳) in the Joseon Dynasty, providing an avenue to explore the historical dynamics between Joseon and China.

Raffaella Rettinger (University of Würzburg)

A (Wo)men's World? – The Implications of a Modern Feminist Retelling of the Shuihu zhuan

With the good fellows of the rivers and lakes at the center of its narrative, the *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (*Water Margin*) has long been known as a violent tale of a group of (mostly) male bandits. These men put comradeship above everything else and emphasize male bonds over sexual desires. The few women who do get to join the bandits have strong masculine traits themselves or are married off quickly to return to (male) status quo. Later retellings and adaptations of the text have so far mostly conformed to this homogenous narrative. But what happens when the male protagonists suddenly become women struggling to make their way in a male dominated Song empire? This is the approach the American writer S.L. Huang takes in her novel *The Water Outlaws* (2023). Here the bandits turn into fierce female or queer characters fighting for their rights and the *Shuihu zhuan* becomes a story about feminism. While the element of marginalization and challenging oppression remains, the narrative structure shifts dramatically. This paper analyzes the differences between the premodern Chinese original and its modern queer, feminist retelling and shines a light on the possibilities and limitations of modern reproductions. Special focus lies on the reinterpretation of established heroes, such as Lin Chong and Lu Zhishen, the omission of others, such as Shi Jin and Wu Song, as well as the change of the narrative from resisting corrupt authorities to challenging patriarchal norms.

Raffaella Rettinger (University of Würzburg)

Show Me the Inked Shoulder: The Trend of Tattooed Poetry and Its Implications for Tang Elite Culture

While poetry is widely known as an artform practiced by all members of society during the Tang dynasty (618–907), the trend of voluntary, decorative tattooing has been largely overlooked. Despite the absence of a decorative tattooing culture within the elite at first glance, there are examples of high-ranking generals, officials, and even rulers who sported all sorts of permanent designs on their bodies. Many of these tattoos were rhymes, some composed by the bearers themselves and others quoting famous poets, such as Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846). This trend was also recorded in the *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩 (*Complete Tang Poems*), where verses can be found under categories such as “poems pierced on the left and right upper arm” (*ci zuoyou bo shi* 刺左右膊詩). The lasting fascination with tattooed poetry mirrors this practice’s ambivalent role and its inherent boundary-breaking potential. While tattooing was traditionally viewed as unfilial, “barbaric” and used to punish criminals, poetry was of great significance to the civic elite. Since records of tattooed men commonly categorize them as “street ruffians,” it seems that these men adapted the art of poetic composition and reinterpreted it to make it their own. By focusing on the interplay between alienation and appropriation, this paper shines a light on those men, who used ink as medium and their bodies as canvas and instrumentalized poetry as their tool to connect with or criticize other members of society and thus find their place in Tang urban culture.

Avital Rom (University of Cambridge)

Effortless Action, Innovation, and the Art of Musical Tuning in the Huainanzi

This paper explores the metaphor of musical tuning (*diao/tiao* 調) as a tool for understanding the subtle balance between the *Huainanzi*'s seemingly conflicting notions of *wuwei* 無為 (effortless action) on one hand, and invention and changemaking on the other. The *Huainanzi* is known for adhering to the Laozian idea of *wuwei*. Its political interpretation determines that operating on this principle “does not mean freezing and not moving, but rather it means that nothing is issued from within oneself” (非謂其凝滯而不動也，以言其莫從己出也). This negates the image of *wuwei* as a completely passive concept: instead of non-action, *wuwei* throughout the text means acting in response to external stimuli. Yet, one cannot help but wonder what room is left within this rhetoric for notions such as human invention and innovation, and the active initiation of political changes. These notions are also held in high regard in the *Huainanzi*, but may appear as breaking from the natural mechanism of stimulus-and-response. I will argue that an analysis of tuning metaphors in the text enables us to understand the resolution offered by Liu An and his co-authors to this tension. It enhances our understanding of how the *Huainanzi* offers a practical guide to balancing between conflicting ideas of change and preservation, invention and tradition, and past and present.

Elizabeth Smithrosser (University of Oxford)

Ink Incarnate: Representations of Ink in the Anthropomorphic Biography Format

If one reimagined ink as a human being, what kind of personality would they have? What would their physical appearance be like, what social roles would they fulfil, and how would their life trajectory pan out? This is a question that has occupied the minds of many premodern Chinese writers when producing anthropomorphic biographies, a humorous literary tradition which borrows the historiographical biography (*zhuan* 傳) genre and deploys wordplay and textual allusions to tell the life story of an object/animal through the veil of a human biographical subject. Ink makes a frequent appearance, not only as the primary biographical subject, but also as a side character in biographies of related objects such as inkstones and brushes. This mental exercise of embodying the social meanings and uses of ink in human form has much to teach us about widely-held perceptions of ink in premodern Chinese society. Notably, the fictional human incarnations of ink do not exhibit a unified or cohesive image. Rather, taken together, the diverse array of invented figures crosses boundaries between social strata, literary archetypes, and gender to include such characters as a monarch, a Daoist mystic, a concubine, a high-ranking minister, a scholar-in-reclusion, and a feudal lord. This paper highlights the fluidity of representations of ink in multiple anthropomorphic biographies from the Tang to Ming and discusses the implications of this for conceptions of ink both for individual writers and within society more broadly, touching upon issues in textual production, material culture, and humour studies.

Tero Tähtinen (Tampere University)

Wang Wei's Usage of Buddhist Metaphors

At the heart of Chinese Chan Buddhist literature lies an epistemological paradox. On principle, the Chan doctrine proclaims that the ultimate truth is beyond verbal expressions and that the whole Chan tradition does not depend on words and concepts. But in order to formulate any sort of doctrine, establish a set of systematic practices and spread the teachings among fellow humans, one is forced to rely on language. As Christoph Anderl has noted, the Chinese literati responded to these challenges by utilizing “an extensive use of metaphorical, non-referential and poetic language.” One of the best examples of this is the poetry of Wang Wei 王維 (701–761), a major Tang dynasty poet who utilized Buddhist ideas, concepts and image repeatedly in his writings. In this presentation I will concentrate on two poems, “Suffering from the Heat” 苦熱 and “Visiting Xiangji Temple” 過香積寺, and discuss the ways in which Wang is making the use of Buddhist metaphors in his verses. The former poem describes how alleviation of extreme weather conditions is found through “Sweet Dew Gate” and the latter ends with taming the “poisonous dragon” – both images taken from Buddhist scriptures. But as I shall demonstrate in my presentation, Wang is not just passively copying them into his writings but utilizes them in a creative and original way and makes them an integral part of his poetic vision.

Federico Valenti (Independent researcher)

Mythical Guardians and Lesser Creatures: Unraveling the Entomological and Ichthyological World of the Shanhai jing

The *Shanhai jing* stands as an invaluable repository of cultural and biological insights, encompassing a myriad of topics from geography and mythology to the natural world. Particularly captivating is the text's portrayal of both legendary and ordinary animals, as well as the connections that can be drawn between them. Mythical guardians, for instance, are often depicted as chimeric creatures with characteristics borrowed from various animals. In this talk, I investigate the entomological and ichthyological realms within the *Shanhai jing* through a thorough analysis of lexemes pertaining to arthropods and marine animals. I specifically delve into the associations between taxonomical words, proper names of *genii loci* and their hypothetical phonetic reconstruction. Furthermore, I explore the ambiguity surrounding the taxonomization of invertebrates and fish in early Chinese culture by examining the distinct usage of characters like *chong* 蟲 and *hui* 虫 in the text, which can broadly represent the category of “lesser creatures” while also specifically denoting a snake-like animal. A particularly emblematic example of this ambiguity is the sentence describing certain people of the Outward South Sea who believed that “snakes are fish.” To enhance our comprehension of these words and their associated meanings, I draw upon lexicographic works such as the *Erya* and *Shuowen jiezi*, comparing and analysing the lexical features of these terms across various texts and time periods. Through this comparative approach, I aim to tentatively offer fresh perspectives on how arthropods, marine animals, and their corresponding lexemes have influenced the early Chinese understanding of the natural world.

WANG Di (Yuelu Academy, Hunan University)

Satire and Early Chinese Literature

The ancient rhetorician Quintilian once states that satire is entirely “Roman,” a provocative claim that still reverberates in our contemporary discussion of the genre. However, the ancient satirical mode that characteristically attacks, teaches and entertains all at once, does not lack global counterparts. What is satire in terms of early Chinese literature? While Chinese wit and humor in the form of vignette and anecdote had been readily available in ancient historical and philosophical texts, the origin of the satirical mode can be attributed to specific classical sources: the power of critique vested in the Mao commentary of *Shijing*, the sardonic dialogues and parodies of *Zhuangzi*, and an evolving socio-historical awareness reflected in poetic illustrations and arrangements of *fu* poems. My paper introduces major themes of early Chinese satirical writings, providing a comparative analysis with Roman satire. Its aim is to challenge the prevalent assumption that early Chinese writings primarily served didactic, religious, or ritualistic purposes. By introducing the concept of satire, my paper illuminates previously unexplored dimensions of well-known texts, such as *Zhuangzi* and Yang Xiong's *fu* poems. These texts, marked by a blend of moral didacticism, dramatic entertainment, and veiled attacks, playfully engage with established ideas and paradigms, employing methods reminiscent of Roman satirical compositions, exemplified by Juvenal and Lucian. Additionally, the early Chinese texts reveal a pervasive “imperial” worldview that permeates various aspects of early world empires. My paper contends that the elements characteristically “Roman” of ancient satires could equally resonate within the realm of early Chinese literature.

Barbara Witt (Trier University)

Ping Caiyun's Suitors: How Lin Lan Xiang Renders Justice on Shuihu zhuan's Powerful Sex Offenders

Lin Lan Xiang 林蘭香 (1838) is a Qing dynasty novel that models its main narrative framework of one man's polygynist household after the infamous *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (1617). It rewrites the latter's merchant household to that of nobility, fictional scions descended from historical generals of the early Ming dynasty. Many of its storylines seem like an intentional rebuttal of the earlier novel's sexualized and violent content. Yet some of its episodes also use and “improve” storylines from *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (1524), the novel that had previously inspired the creation of *Jin Ping Mei*. Two such episodes involve the premarital suitors of eventual fifth concubine Ping Caiyun 平彩雲: After meeting her, the spoiled nephew of the antagonist Mao Qiu 茅球 becomes lovesick to the point of worrying his parents, just like Gao Qiu's 高球 nephew in *Shuihu zhuan*. Her would-be-abductor Dongmen Xun 東方巽—like Ximen Qing 西門慶 of both predecessor novels a rich merchant—is killed by the only *xia* 俠 character, in a call-back to the martial characters of *Shuihu zhuan*. *Lin Lan Xiang* takes care that the stories of these two influential sex offenders in the source text are reworked to render justice upon them while at the same time preserving the chastity and, ultimately, life of its female protagonist in ways that would have been unthinkable in either of its predecessors.

Tobias B. Zürn (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

Re-Creating the Zhuangzi into a Political Tool: The Huainanzi's Western Han Reading of the Proto-Daoist Classic

The *Huainanzi* is a prime example of the intertextual writing practices that dominated early (imperial) China. One of the texts most prominently featured in the *Huainanzi* is the *Zhuangzi*. In this paper, I explore how Liu An and his erudite courtiers recontextualized snippets shared with the proto-Daoist classic, creating an inadvertent reception of Master Zhuang's text from the Western Han. I demonstrate that the *Huainanzi* generates what I call explicit and implicit commentaries by inserting explanations and specifications in its various textual parallels with the *Zhuangzi*. For example, the authors used this method at the beginning of the second chapter to import the concepts of yin and yang and cosmic resonances into a famous cosmogony derived from the *Zhuangzi*. By repeatedly reading the body as a replica of the universe that enables rulers to transcend their human limitations, Liu An's text displays a political and physiological understanding of the proto-Daoist classic that resembles ideas reminiscent of the almost contemporaneous Heshang Gong commentary and its vision of "governing one's kingdom" by "governing one's body." Hence, it seems as if Liu An and his courtiers re-created the *Zhuangzi*, a text that repeatedly displays disdain towards political ambition and organization, into a text whose traces containing "the techniques of Lao[zi] and Zhuang[zi]" could be utilized to maintain political control over all under Heaven.



LITERATURE (MODERN)

LITERATURE (MODERN)

C.T. AU (AU Chung To) (Education University of Hong Kong)

Lyrical Modernism: A Study of the Relationship Between Hong Kong Modernism and the Chinese Lyrical Tradition

No consensus has been achieved on when literary modernism began in Hong Kong. While it is challenging to determine the beginning of Hong Kong modernism with precision, it is an indisputable fact that the publication of *Wenyi Xinchao* (*Literary New Wave*) in the 1950s by Ma Lang, who served as a poet-cum-editor of the magazine, was crucial for the later development of Hong Kong modernism. Among previous studies, it should be noted that only a few have investigated the characteristics of modernism. In addition, the recent development of Western modernist discourse – for example, modernism and tradition are closely related – has not been considered. Ma Lang published both poetry and short stories in the magazine. Judging from Ma's literary works published in *Wenyi Xinchao*, I will suggest that instead of putting an emphasis on renewing the Chinese lyrical tradition in his lyric poetry, Ma took a unique approach by incorporating the lyrical into the novel. The so-called lyrical novel tends to treat the plot and characters lightly, and the emotions of the characters are not explicitly shown. The focus of a lyrical novel is rather on images, mood, or atmosphere. This study argues that Chinese lyrical tradition embodied in Ma Lang's lyrical works are in fact a progressive and future-oriented force in the development of Hong Kong modernism. To do this, I will examine both Ma Lang's and Leung Ping-kwan's, who is arguably the last Hong Kong modernist writer, lyrical novel in this study.

Daniele Beltrame (University for Foreigners of Perugia) and Barbara Bisetto (University of Verona)

Zhou Shoujuan as Translator of Italian Fiction. An Analysis of Zhou's Indirect Translations into Chinese

Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鵬 (1895-1968), one of the major authors of popular literature in the context of the so-called 'Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies' fiction in modern China, was also a prominent and versatile translator of world literature. Being fluent in English, Zhou had access to many original works in English and translations of authors from other languages. Through indirect translation, Zhou could present works from a wide range of literatures to Chinese audiences, including works from literary traditions that were relatively 'peripheral' at the time such as Portuguese, Dutch, Serbian, Swiss, Romanian, and Italian. He published his many translations in the pages of literary magazines and in anthologies especially devoted to foreign literature. This paper aims to examine Zhou Shoujuan's indirect translation of some Italian authors through the mediation of English, focusing on the choice of works and themes and the translation strategies adopted. The corpus includes the translations of short stories by Salvatore Farina (published in 1918), Matilde Serao (1921), Gabriele D'Annunzio (1922, 1924), Luigi Pirandello (1926), Gualfo Civinini (1928), and even the juvenile feuilleton by Benito Mussolini (1941-2). The method will be drawn partly from translation studies, especially from the field of indirect translation, and partly from the historical and social analysis of the literary works, their transplantation and reception, considering translation as a Derridean act of transformation and 'transtextuality' in the broader palimpsest of Weltliteratur.

Martina Benigni (Sapienza University of Rome)

"WeChat Poetry Fever," A Case Study: The Poetry Collective "City Flâneuses' Poems"

In recent years, WeChat (Weixin 微信), probably the most used social networking platform in China, has turned into the stage for a unique poetic phenomenon: the rising of a huge number of official and private accounts, and large WeChat groups dedicated to the sharing, or "posting," writing, reading, and commenting of poems, defined as "WeChat poetry fever" (Luo 2019, 60). This study intends to provide a better understanding of this super-app's (Sandel et al. 2018, 1) overcrowded poetryscape (Stalling 2019, 116) through the analysis of the official WeChat account of Chengshi manyouzhe zhi shi 城市漫游者之诗 ("City flâneuses' poems") poetry collective. The group, formed in Shanghai in 2016, consists of seven women poets born in the 1990s. This study will consider the strategies implied by the collective members to structure and enrich their virtual poetry collection, ever open and constantly in progress, i.e. their official account. The selected case study perfectly shows how "WeChat poetry" works in terms of multimodality, aesthetic experience (Li 2017, 91), engagement, and user/reader interaction (Bronwen 2020, 10). Through interviews conducted with the poets themselves, we will try to grasp to what extent "the medium is the message," as Marshall McLuhan stated, and how is WeChat affecting reading and writing habits in the Chinese literary scene.

Daria Berg and Qian CUI (University of St. Gallen)

China and the Art of War: Perceptions of the Russo-Ukrainian War in Chinese Online Poetry and Visual Art Narratives, 2022-Present

Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022 has rocked our understanding of the geopolitical world order and the role of war in the twenty-first century. China's official reactions and its relations with Russia have confounded the world. Xi Jinping's newly pledged 'no-limits friendship' with Putin manifested in China's official media touting Putin's war propaganda while censoring pro-Ukrainian news. Scholarly debates and global media have dissected the Russo-Ukrainian war from political, economic and social angles, yet few studies analyse Chinese unofficial reactions in popular culture. Chinese cyberspace has become a battleground for contesting discourses from China's vernacular culture and the officially sanctioned culture of the Party State. This study responds to the urgent need to deepen our understanding of China's vernacular culture by artistic and cultural perceptions of the war as seen in online poetry and visual art. Using Foucault's concept of parrhesia ('speaking truth to power') with its connotations of freedom of expression, transparency, duty and gossip (Foucault 1983), this study aims to explore China's indigenous tradition of a vernacular culture 'speaking truth to power' in poetry on Weibo and WeChat and visual art narratives by Cao Fei, Huang Rui, Qi Shaoting, Li Qiang, Deng Kangyan and Badiucao in China and abroad. It will shed new light on how artists and writers brave the risks to go against the Party line and show solidarity with Ukraine, while voicing direct and indirect critiques of autocracy. This paper is jointly authored by Daria Berg and Qian Cui.

Telma Carvalho (University of Lisbon)

Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign Aftermath: Literary Reactions in Chinese Science Fiction

In 1983, the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign in China was launched by Deng Xiaoping as a way to denounce what was perceived as ideological contamination threatening the socialist path, resulting in an immediate impact in several circles of society, particularly on academia and literature (Larson 1989). Among the different literary genres, Science Fiction took a significant toll, due to accusations of "unscientific," "misleading" and thus "harmful to the thinking and morale of readers" (Wang 1986), putting an abrupt halt to the genre that had just started a prolific phase after the Cultural Revolution. The political campaign was short-lived but its impact on SF lingered for several years, reducing publication to residual numbers and pushing writers away from SF altogether (Wu Dingbo 1989) – a period that Wu Yan (2022) now eloquently defines as "hibernation phase." Notwithstanding the scarcity of stories during those years, I argue that its analysis can be valuable to portray the reactions to such impactful measures in the name of socialism. Under the pressure of the campaign and its repercussions, which imaginative frameworks and narrative strategies were explored? Were there innovative elements that defied the political and literary uncertainties of that period? In an attempt to answer these questions, I propose an extensive analysis of several short stories written between 1984 and 1988, such as "First Defeat" (Tong Enzheng, 1984), "Cold Dream in the Dawn" (Ye Yonglie, 1987) and "Boundless Love" (Jiang Yuansheng, 1987), hopefully shedding some light on the phase of Chinese SF that is taken as dormant.

Gloria Cella (Sapienza University of Rome)

The Female Characters in Contemporary Chinese Fantasy Short Stories

Mostly regarded as a conservative genre due to its relationship with traditional storytelling motifs and forms (Attebery 1992; Manlove 1983), recent studies of Western fantasy literature have explored the possibility of this genre to deal with women's and gender issues, considering changes in the representation of female characters and their role in the story, from passive to active for example (Turello 2021), or finding relationships between feminist movement and this kind of speculative fiction (Dassler 2021). Despite the setting in an invented secondary world and the escapist nature of this form of literature, fantasy fiction cannot be separated from social reality; it can reveal worries and desires (Jackson 1981), and sometimes it also has the potential to promote progressive content (Baker 2012). Since fantasy as a genre started developing in China at the beginning of the 21st century following the success of foreign fantasy literature, several young female writers, such as Chu Xidao, Li Duan, and Shen Yingying, have approached with enthusiasm this new form of fiction. Through the analysis of three of their short stories published in fantasy literature journals between 2003 and 2013, this paper will focus on the representation and the role of their female characters in order to understand whether they were different from female characters depicted by male writers, which worries or desires were expressed and perceived as urgent by young female writers, and whether fantasy genre can be considered a new tool for conveying women's issues.

Ying-tung CHAU (CUHK)

Towards a Coming Community: The Modes of Exchange in Wu Ming Yi's Sea Breeze Club

In the novel *Sea Breeze Club*, authored by Wu Ming-Yi and published in 2023, a Taoroko village serves as a microcosm of Taiwan Island, depicting the transition from the nomadic lifestyle of indigenous tribes to the establishment of settled agriculture, the emergence of the state, and the eventual arrival of capitalism. Drawing inspiration from the works of Japanese Marxist philosopher Kojin Karatani (1941-), particularly *The Structure of World History* and his latest publication in 2022 titled *Force and Modes of Exchange*, this research examines the economic behaviors portrayed in the novel and the resulting social formation. Departing from the conventional Marxist notion of “modes of production,” the analysis adopts the concept of “modes of exchange” to explore these themes. Moreover, this study critically evaluates the interlocking Capital-Nation-State system that characterizes modern global society. It argues that *Sea Breeze Club* presents possibilities for transcending the Capital-Nation-State system, with the ethics of nature embodying the transformative potential referred to as “Mode D” by Kojin Karatani. While nature writing has received considerable attention in Anthropocene literature, a comprehensive understanding of its revolutionary power necessitates a simultaneous examination of economic behaviors and social formations.

Hsiang-Yin Sasha CHEN (Academia Sinica)

Constructing the “New Women” and Gender Paradise: The Globalization and Localization of Kollontaiism in Modern China

My paper focuses on the theme of constructing “new women” and gender paradise in Kollontai’s writing, with specific reference to her stories, novellas and speeches translated in Modern China. The first part starts with contextualizing Kollontai’s ideas on this theme in not only her literary works and political thoughts in Russian, articulating the complicated relationship between politics and literature in either Russia or the Soviet Union. The next section investigates how Chinese translators refer to the Japanese translation of Kollontai and transfer/transmit such theme into either their creative works or underground Communist propaganda via public bulletins and magazines. Also, this section shows how Chinese and Japanese leftists operated the mechanism of literary activities during the 1920s and 30s in both countries. Furthermore, this paper compares Kollontai’s works with the prose of Chinese writers, such as Mao Dun and Ding Ling, providing transcultural analyses of globalizing and localizing Kollontaiism from the Soviet Union and Japan to China.

CHEN Shi-Ru (National Taiwan University)

Discourses on the Bodies of Overseas Travelers in Taiwan During the Japanese Colonial Period: A Textual Analysis of Dr. Tu Tsung-ming's Dr. Tu Tsung-ming's World Travelogue and Lin Xian-tang's Global Travelogue

During the period spanning from 1845 to 1945, Taiwan was subject to Japanese colonial governance. Taiwanese travelers encountered intricate issues of identity while journeying abroad during this epoch, and narratives concerning the body were frequently interwoven with national identity. In December 1925, Dr. Tu Tsung-ming, the inaugural holder of a medical doctorate in Taiwan, initiated a two-year medical expedition to Europe and the United States, meticulously documenting a plethora of travel experiences. These records were subsequently consolidated into *Dr. Tu Tsung-ming's World Travelogue*. Lin Xian-tang, acknowledged as the “Father of the Taiwanese Parliament,” embarked on a sojourn to Europe and the United States in May 1927, which extended a year. He disseminated numerous travelogue articles through newspapers, later assembled into the compilation titled *Global Travelogue*. Both individuals were the select few elites during the Japanese colonial era who partook in global travels—one being medically oriented and the other possessing expertise in political and cultural domains. How did they perceive the bodies of others and negotiate their own ethnic identity while abroad? When translating these experiences into travelogue narratives, what profound meanings lie beneath the textual surface? This paper will examine the portrayal of the body in two travelogues, investigating how Taiwanese travelers during the Japanese colonial period incorporated their observations of the body into reflections on self and nation during transnational journeys. The exploration articulates the distinctive characteristics of Taiwan’s overseas travelogues in the Japanese colonial period.

Shuo-win CHEN (National Chengchi University)

Redrawing the Literary Map: Foreign Literature and Art Translations in the Literary Supplement of Ta Kung Pao in 1930s Shanghai

Ta Kung Pao is an important major newspaper in modern China. Among several literary supplements, “Literature and Art” is particularly important. In April 1936, *Ta Kung Pao* launched the Shanghai edition. In an effort to engage with the interests of its readers, the Shanghai edition introduced special issues such as “Drama and Film” and “Ta Kung Club,” dedicated space to translating and introducing foreign literature and art, film and drama, fine arts. With the special issue of Lu Xun’s translations and modern poetry introduction in the original “Literature and Art,” together crafted a distinctive literary and artistic landscape. This literary supplement can be likened to a garden of world literature, fostering literary dialogues between China and the West. It also became a hub for cultural flows, assimilating diverse cultural flows from various parts of East Asia. Therefore, the transcultural practice on literary supplement of *Ta Kung Pao* in 1930s Shanghai can be seen as a journey among dynamic artistic contact nebulae, makes it worthy of thorough and in-depth analysis. By situating the translations back into the diverse literary environment of Shanghai in the 1930s, the article aims to provide insights into the characteristics and cultural connotations embedded in *Ta Kung Pao*’s translations of foreign literature and art. The focus on cultural transformation within the framework of world literature adds a layer of complexity to the exploration, shedding light on how *Ta Kung Pao*’s literary supplement participated in the global cultural conversation of its time. This article also pays attention to delving into the representations of the world and China within these translations as well. Lastly, this study seeks to contribute to the scholarly dialogue on world literature by offering this nuanced examination of the translations within literary supplement in 1930s Shanghai.

Lik Kwan CHEUNG (CUHK)

Cross-media Adaptations of Chinese Opera Chasing Fish and the Deep Time of Audiovisual Technology: A Media Archaeological Perspective

This paper explores the cross-media adaptations of Chinese opera *Chasing Fish* from a perspective of media archeology. In 1956, Tian Han and others watched the Xiang Opera performance of *Chasing Fish* in Changsha. This Xiang Opera adaptation, based on the Ming dynasty legend *The Fish Basket of Guanyin*, emphasized the forbidden love between an inhuman carp fairy and the scholar, Zhang Zhen, highlighting the theme of true love. This adapted version deeply moved Tian Han, leading him and his wife, An E, to adapt this love story from Xiang Opera to Yue Opera with the same title and *The Story of Golden Fish Scales (Jinlin Ji)* which transcends specific opera genres. The Yue Opera performance achieved unprecedented success when it was staged at the Shanghai Yue Opera Theater. Following this success, the story was further adapted into the Yue Opera film *The Story of Chasing Fish*. Recordings and cassettes of this film and opera selections were soon published and gained popularity. In 1960, the Great Wall Movie Enterprise in Hong Kong adapted *Jinlin Ji* into the film *A Mermaid’s Love*, starring Xia Meng, a prominent figure in Hong Kong’s film industry. Clearly, Tian Han and An E’s adaptations directly influenced the dynamic trajectory of the story in a translingual, cross-media, and translocal sense, encompassing various audiovisual forms such as performances, films, records, comics, and television series. By employing Siegfried Zielinski’s concept of “deep time,” this research uncovers the temporal strata shaped and reshaped by the variants of audiovisual technologies.

Chiara Cigarini (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice)

Women’s Invisibility within Danmei “Dystopia”: Thousand Autumns as a Case Study

Starting with an observation of the rise of the *danmei* phenomenon in Europe and the significant editorial investment made by Italian publishing house Mondadori in its translation, this contribution aims to analyze the images of China projected beyond Chinese national borders through this narrative genre, viewed by some as a feminist “utopia.” The research focuses on *Thousand Autumns (Qianqiu千秋)*, a *danmei* novel by the web writer Meng Xi Shi (梦溪石), set to be translated into Italian in the coming months. The novel revolves around the romantic encounter between Yan Wushi, a cynical master cultivator, and Shen Qiao, a noble leader of a Daoist sect, primarily focusing on the former’s attempt to corrupt the latter. The story is examined here from the perspective of women’s invisibility, within and beyond the narrative text. It explores the detrimental dynamics inherent in the romantic relationship between the two male protagonists (in *danmei* novels, heterosexual relationships are generally projected onto male bodies) in relation to the problematic reception of this genre in Italy by a segment of its “invisible” online fandom. Through textual close reading and an analysis of Italian participatory culture, this article examines the interrelations between the toxic dynamics within the text and the contentious practices of the genre’s broader fandom. The aim is to investigate the possible limitations of *danmei*’s feminist message and to evaluate whether its fandom can effectively challenge a top-down model of cultural flow.

Qian CUI and Daria Berg (University of St. Gallen)

Reimagined Communities: Nation and Nationalism in Contemporary Chinese Art and Poetry on Russo-Ukrainian War

This study proposes to revisit the debate about nationalism and ‘imagined communities’ in Chinese visual art and literary narratives about the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Since Sun Yat-sen led China into the age of ‘modernity’ in 1912, the concepts of nation (*minzu*), nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*) and patriotism (*aiguo zhuyi*) have been playing important roles in China’s official discourse as tools to stabilize the political leadership. Investigating China as an ‘invented nation.’ Harrison (2001) has described the ideology of nationalism as ‘a vital ingredient’ in the political situation of the PRC. In 2012, Xi Jinping declared the ‘China Dream’ as the motto of his rule, sparking new narratives about processes of identity formation and ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983) of the nation-state. This paper addresses the urgent need to examine the intensifying discourse on nationalism under Xi Jinping. After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine China’s official media amplified Russian propaganda while boosting public discourses on nationalism. Alongside the official narrative, China’s mediasphere has become a dynamic site for intellectual contemplations and artistic representations of the war from different perspectives. This paper examines poetry on the Russo-Ukrainian war by Liao Weitang, Liu Weicheng and Tang Ying, and artworks by Xu Weixin to investigate how nationalism feeds into Chinese narratives constructing and deconstructing imagined communities beyond the nation-state. Such reimagined communities map out visions challenging the official narrative of a unified ‘China Dream.’ This paper is jointly authored by Qian Cui and Daria Berg.

Mario De Grandis (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice)

Discourses on Unity and Diversity: Exploring Origin Myths in the PRC’s Book Series of Folk Minority Literature

Scholars have long regarded the Grimm brothers’ famed folk tale collection as a strategic effort to establish a shared cultural tradition essential for German nation-building. Inspired by the German example, the PRC embarked on extensive projects geared at compiling folk literary works of all China’s 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities. Given the sheer amount of texts collected in the *Book Series of Folk Minority Literature*, a multivolume anthology by the Shanghai Literature and Arts Publishing House released at irregular intervals between 1979-2012 provides a useful case study in the genre of origin myths. An analysis of the anthology’s paratexts reveals the editorial alignment with the state’s discourse on ethnicity, presenting each “distinct” group as part of the pluralistic unitary pattern of the Chinese nation. However, a close reading of the stories collected exhibits a great diversity of themes, hinting at divergent traditions and practices. My study speculates that the heterogeneity of folk literature reverberates the fact that Chinese ethnic groups are by and large a creation of the Chinese Communist Party. Thus, the anthologies appear at once to promote as well as challenge the official discourse of China as a unified multiethnic country. This seemingly self-contradictory phenomenon shows that folk literature, in its edited form, cannot be easily subjugated under the nation-building project.

Yuan GAO (Palacký University Olomouc)

China and Taiwan: The Mechanism of Making Literary Reputation

This study aims to uncover what underlies the changing literary reputations of Lin Yutang in China and Taiwan from 1949 to the present day. To achieve this, a comparative approach is adopted to bring out the competing nature of the relations between the two culturally connected yet politically separated entities where Lin’s reputation fluctuated as a result of a seesaw effect. It argues that the literary reputation of an author in the vortex of the cross-strait relations has never been a simplistic literary matter, but rather a product of a top-down pyramid mechanism where political ideology at the apex sways or controls subordinate components such as language, literature, culture, and historiography. Processed through this mechanism, authors are assigned a position at the bottom, either included or excluded, dishonoured, or canonized. It finds that Lin’s reputation hinges on the extent to which his international fame, ideas, and actual words can be appropriated, adapted, and manipulated to endorse a national initiative focused on fostering nationalism and patriotism. The finding highlights the dynamics of self and other that threaded through the imaginative process of Chinese or Taiwanese national identity, each imaging itself initially and foremostly against the other, subsequently and additionally against culturally distinct others on the global map.

Levi S. Gibbs (Dartmouth College)

Envisioning Hybridity: Merging Wen and Wu in Gao Jianqun's The Last Xiongnu

Recent scholarship in the field of Critical Han Studies has raised questions about what it means to be Han in China today and how the Han envision their “Chineseness” in light of a diverse ancestry. In Gao Jianqun’s epic novel set in northern Shaanxi Province, *The Last Xiongnu*, he explores how Chinese identity has been influenced by and “revitalized” through encounters between restless nomadic and rooted agrarian peoples in China’s Northwest, recounting stories of “mixed” descendants of a Xiongnu soldier and a Han woman, who over the course of the twentieth century become bandits, revolutionaries, and literary and political figures. While the descendants are ostensibly “hybrid” individuals, a close reading of the text reveals ways in which their hybridity is portrayed as an alternation between opposites—one that allows for reflection on Chinese moral conceptions of the self and other. Building on studies of Chinese conceptualizations of race and masculinity, this paper examines how the admiration and prejudice expressed toward the couple’s descendants reflect tensions in how change can or cannot be incorporated into a stable sense of self. Highlighting ways in which fears of social change are conceptualized through the medium of race, the paper examines characters who combine *wu* (martial) and *wen* (civil) masculinities, suggesting that the dual, alternating natures of these characters acts as a metaphor for the threat and promise of social change.

Salvatore Giuffrè (King’s College London)

Decadence and Effects of Modernity in the Chinese Poetry of Wang Duqing

This paper explores French literary influences in the symbolist poetry of Wang Duqing. Wang Duqing seemingly employs European symbolist elements to represent decadence and the effects of modernity during China’s Republican period. This was when young intellectuals studied abroad and gained first-hand experience with those cultures that ultimately shaped modern Chinese literature. Although they lack popularity among literary circles, Wang Duqing’s writings stick out as successful examples of modern poetry in a period when young Chinese poets integrated models from the West into their writings in an attempt to create a “modern” and “national” literature for the people. French symbolists seemingly became for Wang Duqing a source of inspiration. His writings transcend Chinese linguistic rules and renew the poetic form as a fluid and communicative means of expression. The dominant themes are sorrow, loneliness, nostalgia and isolation represented by gloomy and melancholic images: rain and mist, dusk, memories, dreams, ruined cities, broken hearts, etc. The details of urban life thus become the new protagonists of the new literature and even the most traditional themes are used in rather unconventional ways. Wang Duqing poetically depicts a world where memory serves as both the medium and the content of his creation. This world, filled with blurred or distant images in space and time, exacerbates the ennui of the poetic subject and becomes lyrical material for fine examples of Modernist writings in Chinese literature.

Joern Peter Grundmann (National Sun Yat-sen University)

Between Multilingualism, Heteroglossia and Literary Language: Discussing the Use of Cantonese Vernacular in Contemporary Hong Kong Literature

This paper discusses how the use of Cantonese vernacular within standard Chinese texts in contemporary Hong Kong literature addresses various socio-political tensions that underlie different diglossic situations specific to Hong Kong society. In other words, I take multilingualism here as a form of heteroglossia. The appropriateness of this approach can be derived from the history of modern Hong Kong literature itself. Yau Sai Man 邱世文 (1951-1998) was arguably the first to introduce written Cantonese vernacular into the realm of “serious” literature by modelling its use on Bakhtin’s literary theory of dialogism. This agenda has been picked up and further elaborated in the late 20th and early 21st century by such important literary figures as Dung Kai Cheung 董啟章 and Wong Bik-wan 黃碧雲. For these and many other Hong Kong writers, Cantonese vernacular serves as literary form and is thus to a greater or lesser degree inseparable from the literary message their works are meant to convey. As a case study, I will look at two literary text that make the local situation of diglossia in Hong Kong their topic. Both Lau Yee Wa’s 劉綺華 *Speechloss* 失語 and Tong Yiu’s 唐睿 “*Hi Dad*” reflect actual diglossic constellations and multilingual interactions almost mimetically by rendering different languages, topolects, registers and even accents phonetically with the help of both Chinese graphs and alphabetic transcriptions. I shall demonstrate how this translates into a literary form that at times almost equals the works’ content.

Bojia GUO (Guangdong University of Finance)

A Tower on the Ruins: Mu Xin's Modern Subjectivity in Literature and Painting

As an artist profoundly influenced by the May Fourth Movement, Mu Xin (1927-2011) drew inspiration from modernism, evident in his literary works and paintings from the 1950s to the 2000s, particularly in his use of imagery depicting ruins and towers. According to Mu Xin, he utilized the image of ruins to symbolize the situation of cultural fracture and discontinuity of the post-May Fourth era, employing the image of a tower as a representation of individual subjectivity. These two images held significance during the May Fourth period. Since Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren and others assigned different metaphors to the tower, the image of tower became especially important. In modern Chinese pictorial newspapers, the depiction of ruins was also frequently used to evoke national sentiments as a visual symbol of war and violence. However, Mu Xin's portrayal of towers and ruins diverges notably from the mainstream narrative of nation and revolution. This paper explores how Mu Xin represents the tower on ruins in both his literary works and paintings to express a dialectical aesthetic appreciation of the impermanence and permanence of life. He provides a fresh interpretation of the image previously used in the May Fourth period, visually conveying his literary ideas about individualism, and showcasing his strong artistic subjectivity. Through textual and visual analysis, this paper reveals that Mu Xin, as a post-May Fourth Movement artist, attempts to continue the "unfinished modernity" of the May Fourth Movement in cross-media artistic methods.

Ye GUO (Université Paris Cité)

Question of Legitimacy: Forms of Resistance in Translation Activities of Pierre Bourdieu in Mainland China Since the 1990s

In discussing how to bring power mechanisms to light, Michel Foucault noted the importance of exploring different forms of resistance as a starting point for studying the power itself (Foucault 1982). As to translation activities in contemporary China, while overt displays of resistance may be uncommon, subtler forms can be observed in various negotiations among different actors. Our presentation will focus on Pierre Bourdieu's books in China, and through paratextual materials (Genette 1987) and interviews, we propose that regarding to one of the internationally renowned sociologists with significant symbolic capital, the question of who has the legitimacy to translate or publish his works has emerged as a central issue fraught with tensions. Translators from university language departments may find themselves needing to justify their translation strategies to some sociologists who are skeptical about an "outsider's" proper grasp of Bourdieu's theories. Likewise, editors without an educational background in French language or social sciences may face challenges in upholding their position when their perspectives diverge from those of the translators. Analyzing these moments of tension, which may extend beyond conventional anti-authority resistance, will provide us with a deeper understanding of the power dynamics underlying the translation of social sciences, which may be considered as a body of knowledge aspiring to be socially shared and validated (Merton 1968).

Kamila Hladikova (Palacký University Olomouc)

Pema Tsenden's A Half-told Story and the Mundane "Magic" of Tibet

Oral tradition and storytelling emerge as cornerstone elements within Pema Tsenden's (Ch. Wanma Caidan, 1969-2023) literary repertoire, significantly contributing to the characterization of his works under the umbrella of "magical realism." Scholars have discerned the Tibetan iteration of magical realism both in the works of Sinophone Tibetan writers (such as Tashi Dawa, Sebo, and Alai) and in Tibetophone fiction, namely in several short stories published in the 1980s. Given the inclusion of supernatural elements in Pema Tsenden's Tibetophone works (e.g., the novella "Snow," 1999), critics have often regarded him as one of the exponents of Tibetan magic realism. This interpretation, however, reduces the author's contribution to the genre. Focusing on his latest published volume, the short story collection *A Half-told Story* (*Gushi zhi jiang le yiban*, 2022), I show how Pema Tsenden breaks away from fantastical and supernatural elements to instead firmly ground his narration in the everyday reality of Tibetan people. This paper endeavors to construct a conceptual map delineating the "folk's perspective" (*minjian lichang*) in Pema Tsenden's storytelling inspired by folk tales about tricksters, walking corpses or clan feuds. By examining the sophisticated interplay between magical realism and folk perspectives in Pema Tsenden's literary oeuvre, this paper provides a more nuanced understanding of his literary sophistication.

Qian HOU (University of Munich)

Performing Poetry: Spatial Practice of Public Poetry Reading as Art Education in Contemporary China, 1990-2023

This research would examine the spatial practice of poetry's public reading to intervene in public art education and analyze why it is a better method compared with private silent reading. Theorized in the framework of Lefebvre's perceived-conceived-lived triad, this research would analyze how the space is transformed into three levels to benefit poetry's public education. Two typical cases in contemporary China (1990-2023) would be employed to analyze how public poetry reading transforms public spaces into poetic, mythical and social spaces. Accordingly, it would be analyzed how the presence of poetry is realized through such space transformations: the presence of body and life, the presence of poetics and mythology, and the presence of social field. The final end is to prove that with the presence of poetry at these three levels, the art education through poetry's public reading is effective to promote poetry's public communication, strengthen national identity and democratic senses, treat the human alienation from industrialization and realize Heidegger's poetic dwelling.

Yawen HU (Kyoto University)

Tasting the Economic Reform: Gustatory Experiences and the Hybrid Layers of Political Ideologies in Wong Kar-wai's Adaptation Blossoms Shanghai (2023)

This paper examines the gustatory experience depicted in Wong Kar-wai's 2023 television series *Blossoms Shanghai*. Based on Jin Yucheng's novel *Blossoms* (2013), Wong shifted the narrative focus to A-Bao/Mr. Bao and life in Shanghai in the 1990s, highlighting Bao's involvement in foreign trade and the stock market as a result of the economic reform of the People's Republic of China. In their pursuit of business success, the protagonists frequent various restaurants, such as *Zhizhen Yuan*, *Honglu Restaurant*, *Jin Mei Lin* on Huanghe Road, *Night Tokyo* on Jinxian Road, *Xin Lan Ju* on Yunnan Road, an eatery selling pork rib and rice cake and other places for eating. As Susan Steward suggests, senses, sensibilities, and feelings all bear traces of reason, ideas, and ideologies of a particular time. What and how do they taste? How social values, norms, and practices are embodied in their taste? How do gustatory experiences interact with social transformations? To answer these questions, I will conduct a sensory and historical analysis with a focus on the interactive relationship between taste and ideologies. In doing so, this research aims to challenge the conventional historiographic assumptions and categories, including socialist/post-socialist, Mao/post-Mao, and tradition/modern. By analyzing Wong's adaptation through a sensory lens, I argue that the transformation of the sociopolitical system was not demarcated by a particular policy. Rather, it was gradual, showing hybridity with multiple cultural and ideological layers that can be manifested in the sense of taste.

HUANG Yi-Kuan (National Changhua University of Education)

Gender and Nationality in Film Adaptations of Xiao Hong

This paper will explore the relationship between the creation, biographical writing and image reproduction of Chinese female writers. The purpose of this study is to re-examine how the life history, creative process and biographical writing of female writers are transformed into film and TV drama series. Biographical films can be divided into documentaries and dramas. This paper also attempts to analyze what kind of gender connotation and modernity is shaped in female biographical films, through cross-textual research on the multiple characteristics of Xiao Hong's image. Because Xiao Hong perfectly combines body writing, femininity, and national destiny into the text, they describe her often highlight the two keywords of "feminism" and "nationalism" in the media or literary circle. The biographical images of female writers show their life narrative and literary narrative structure, through this "meta-narrative," helps us explore other possibilities of the modern imagination of the May Fourth Movement in the process of synchronic and dialogic reading.

Jessica Imbach (University of Freiburg)

Go-Humanism in Contemporary Science Fiction

The phenomenal rise in interest in artificial intelligence in recent years has been accompanied by a pop-cultural fascination with human behaviors and activities that appear highly computational in nature, such as chess and savant syndrome (e.g., in TV shows such as *Suits*, *Sherlock Holmes*, and *The Queen's Gambit*). In this context, extreme feats of pattern recognition and photographic memory are not so much showcases of human uniqueness, as machines can now typically outperform humans in these tasks. Rather, they are part of a larger anthropomorphizing discourse around artificial intelligence. Prior to AlphaGo's victories over Lee Sedol in 2016 and Ke Jie in 2017, this did not apply to the game of Go, as it was believed to be a form of creative intelligence that machines could not match. It is not surprising, then, that Go features prominently in several Chinese science fiction novels that revolve around the theme of artificial intelligence, such as Han Song's *Mars Shines Over America* (2000) and Shuang Chimu's *Three-Dimensional Go* (2018). These texts construct, or deconstruct, as it were, what I call Go-humanism – the belief that Go uniquely embodies human thought culture. In doing so, however, they also ask how AI can be imagined and performed in a “Chinese way” – thus linking contemporary science fiction to the root-seeking questions raised in novels such as Ah Cheng's *Chess King* (1984) over four decades ago. Rather than focusing on the question of cultural exceptionalism in posthumanist storytelling, this paper situates Go narratives in contemporary science fiction within the larger debate about the relationship between nationalism and humanism in contemporary Chinese literature since the 1980s.

Sujie JIN (University of Zurich)

Digital Reminiscence: Unveiling the Cultural Revolution in the Story of Times

Although the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) has been downplayed in China's official narratives, its traces have been gradually increasing in the realm of online fiction, particularly in the genre called the story of times (*niandai wen* 年代文) whose temporal setting primarily encompasses the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Amidst strict censorship, the Cultural Revolution does not feature prominently in the story of times; rather, it is portrayed as a catalyst for the character and plot development, thereby arousing curiosity and discussion about the covert causes of societal chaos, the real-life experiences of the sent-down youth, and the unfair mistreatment of intellectuals and elites subjected to confinement to labor camps. Beyond that, the story of times also attempts to map the class backgrounds of the beneficiaries or the implicated subjects (Rothberg 2019) not only during the Cultural Revolution but also in the subsequent period of China's reform and opening up. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the representations of the Cultural Revolution in the story of times, which serves as an alternative way of approaching this public secrecy. The story of times reflects the tension between public awareness and the unspoken agreement that discourages open discussion on the Cultural Revolution. This proliferating genre mirrors the intricate interplay of abundant information in the digital era, the collective expectations of China's young netizens, and the dynamics of power.

Wenxin JIN (Ca' Foscari University of Venice/Sorbonne Nouvelle University)

The Infectivity of Death: The “Bitter Fame” of Sylvia Plath and the Death Writing in Contemporary Chinese Women's Poetry

Translated into Chinese in the 1980s, American poet Sylvia Plath, together with other American confessional poets Robert Rowell, Anne Sexton, and John Berryman, triggered a fever of confessional writing in Chinese poetry. Compared to her literary fellows, Plath is the most translated poet in China and her works has been retranslated several times in un/official publications in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In fact, the hypertranslatability of Plath's works cannot detach from “the Myth of Plath” constructed by the paratext of her Chinese translations. In such a myth, Plath is constructed as an “expert of suicide,” a psychiatric disordered woman and a poet sacrificing her life for the divine poetry, which, actually, is interwoven with the construction of “the Cult of Poetry” in the 1980s and 1990s' China—it takes poetry as a religious faith with which many male poets committed suicide for poetry. However, for post-Maoist female poets, death is not the real practice, but a textual obsession. Under the impact of Plath's poems, death appeared in post-Maoist Chinese female poetry as the most popular theme. Adopting the sociology of literature and paratext studies, this paper traces how “the Myth of Plath” was invented by Chinese mediators, and analyzes how it interacted with “the cult of poetry” and evoked the fever of death writing in post-Maoist Chinese Women's poetry. In genology, this paper will shed light on how “the Myth of Plath” limits the reception and the localization of the very genre, confessional poetry, in mainland China.

Hiu-lam KWOK (CUHK)

Subtle Words in Fat Years: Rewriting of Hong Kong Discourse in Chan Koon-chung's Hong Kong Trilogy and China Trilogy

Sinophone writer originally from Hong Kong who has been living in Beijing since 2000. Through his writing, Chan reflects on the Hong Kong discourse, which he calls “Multicultural hybrid cosmopolitanism.” Chan’s novels, *Hong Kong Trilogy* (2004 updated version) and *China Trilogy* (2019 collected version) are primarily set after the handover of Hong Kong and explore the isolation and challenges faced by Hong Kong people after China regained sovereignty. Chan argues that a rich Hong Kong discourse must combine the four dimensions of globalization, sovereign state, SAR, and the subject of Hong Kong. By acknowledging Hong Kong’s intertwined history and constantly questioning ourselves, hidden motives and loopholes can be identified. Chan believes that the hybrid characteristics of Hong Kong people and the Hong Kong discourse are essential to its identity. However, he notes that these characteristics have disappeared in recent years due to the pressure exerted by global capitalism and sovereign states. Chan’s novels serve as a warning that the Hong Kong discourse must be recontextualized in light of the rapid changes in China-Hong Kong relations.

Sze Wing KWOK (The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong)

Urban Noise: The Auditory Modernity of Mao Dun's The Twilight

From the perspective of soundscape, this paper presents a new understanding of auditory modernity in Mao Dun’s *The Twilight: A Romance of China* in 1930. Published in 1933, *The Twilight* revolves around the protagonist Wu Sunfu and vividly represents the tapestry of urban life in 1930s Shanghai, marking it as a milestone in modern Chinese novels and literary realism. While many scholars have reevaluated Mao Dun’s romanticism and decadent style in recent decades, this paper delves into Mao Dun’s depiction of the soundscape of modern Shanghai to uncover further connections between the novel and modernism, as well as Haipai’s urban writing. In contrast to the Shanghai Neo-sensationist writers who were fascinated by the sweet and wonderful jazz music in the dance clubs, as a leftist, Mao Dun focused on various noises in the urban city, including the sound of engines in the factories, the bell of the stock exchange, the sounds of war, and also showed his interests in the honking of cars and the beeping of telephones. Through an auditory approach, this paper will analyze Mao Dun’s representation of soundscape and his manifestation of modernity during the period of industrialization in Republican China. In doing so, I argue that auditory experiences in the novel are essential in shaping new modern heroic images and capturing the pulse of industrialization. Consequently, my research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the shared aesthetic tendencies between Mao Dun, the Shanghai modernists, and the internationalist avant-garde.

Connie Ho-yee KWONG (CUHK)

Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism: A Transcultural Study of Esperanto Resistance Literature in Hong Kong

During the 1930s, amidst the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, numerous magazines emerged in Mainland China that utilized Esperanto as a means of international propaganda against Japanese imperialism. Notably, publications such as *Ĉinio Hurlas* (*China Howls*, 1936-37) based in Shanghai and *Voĉoj el Oriento* (*Voices from the East*, 1938-40) based in Wuhan prominently featured nationalist ideologies and patriotic sentiments, reinforcing prevailing anti-Japanese narratives. In contrast, *Orienta Kuriero* (*Eastern Courier*, 1938-39), launched in Hong Kong as a British crown colony, played a significant role in deviating from the prevailing nationalist anti-war magazines in China. This paper delves into the unique political and aesthetic perspectives brought by Ferenc Braun (1896-1992), the editor of *Orienta Kuriero* and one of the few Hungarian Esperantists actively involved in the Chinese resistance movement against the Japanese. It further explores how Braun’s recognition and appreciation of cultural values within Chinese literature shaped the magazine’s focus on transnational and transcultural anti-war literature in Esperanto, as well as its close connection with May Fourth literature. The magazine’s prominent feature, the “Literatura Rubriko” (Literature Column), showcased translations of littérature désengagée, including works by Lu Xun, Xu Dishan, Zang Kegia, Xie Bingyin, and others. Finally, this paper critically examines how *Orienta Kuriero*, as an anti-war magazine utilizing Esperanto – a neutral global language – provided an alternative lens to reconsider the intricate connections and tensions between nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Man Fung KWONG (Hong Kong Metropolitan University)

Travelogues of Chinese Writers in Asia in the 1980s – A Study on Guangzhou's Flower City Magazine

In the 1980s, Chinese literature experienced a resurgence, with numerous literary magazines being launched. One of those is *Flower City*, which was founded in Guangzhou, the “Southern Window” of Chinese Literature. *Flower City* not only provided a platform for writers to publish their works, but also actively absorbed foreign literature and culture. It brought many new impacts to contemporary Chinese literature. In addition to translating a large number of Western literary works, it also established the “Overseas Wind Letter” column, which included numerous travelogues by Chinese writers who had travelled to Japan, Thailand, Iran, the Philippines, Pakistan, and other places. These articles served as a bridge for Chinese readers to reconnect with the world. They not only reflected the choices and absorptions of the literary world during the early stage of the “Reform and Opening Up” policy, but also resonated with the works of Chinese writers at the time, further paving the way for the development of contemporary Chinese travel literature. This study examines how Chinese writers came to understand the world through their travels, and through analyzing the writers’ selection of topics, perspectives, and rhetoric, it seeks to understand the special significance of this column in the early 1980s.

Siu Hin LAM (CUHK)

“Madame Roland” in East Asia: A Transcultural Reading of Liang Qichao's Biography of Modern Heroine Madame Roland and its Korean Translation

In 1902, Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873-1929) published *Biography of Modern Heroine Madame Roland* (革命第一女傑羅蘭夫人傳; hereafter the *Biography*), a biographical text which depicts the life of the symbolic revolutionary figure Madame Roland (1754-1793) in the French Revolution. Earlier studies regarding the *Biography* focuses mainly on the comparison between Liang’s text and its Japanese source text. This paper, however, investigates Liang’s text and its earliest Korean translation in 1906. The earliest Korean translation of the *Biography* can be traced back to Sonyeon Hanbando (소년한반도, *The Young Korean Peninsula*), which is believed to be one of the earliest modern periodicals in twentieth-century Korea. With the attempt to illustrate the trajectory of the *Biography*’s travel in East Asia, this paper aims to shed light on the bridging role of Liang’s text in the process of transnational dissemination. Comparing the Korean translation to Liang’s text, it further shows how the image of Madame Roland is metamorphosed from a “revolutionary Heroine” to a “Mother of Liberty.” With the Korean translation considered, it suggests the transculturality of the *Biography* formed a genealogy of image of Madame Roland in the early twentieth-century East Asia.

Yangyang LAN (EPHE, Paris)

The Ideal Code of Conduct for Ordinary People: Songs for Educating the People (quanmin 'ge 勸民歌) in Imperial China

During Imperial China, educating and improving the morals and behaviour of the common people was crucial to grassroots governance. To achieve this, honest officials would personally write vernacular verses called “*quanmin 'ge* 勸民歌” (songs for educating the people). These songs are usually in groups, describing good and bad behaviour with simple explanations, as well as explaining laws and regulations. Written mainly by local officials, county magistrates, especially, these songs reveal their ideal of morality, behaviour and life for the common people under their rule. The target audience was ordinary people, including the illiterate, so the songs were written in simple language. This study examines more than 280 songs written during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1636-1912) dynasties. It analyses what code of conduct the songs set out, how they were disseminated and how useful they were in guiding ordinary people. The study concludes that these songs, which used simple language, and were posted in villages and preached by local scholars, were an attempt by local officials to guide people’s behaviour and to communicate laws and regulations to the grassroots. These songs reveal the “parental” mentality of local officials, especially local magistrates, towards ordinary people. These songs are collected in local gazetteers as part of the biographies of officials, mostly their achievements. Compared to the detailed records of the songs, their actual usefulness is usually only vaguely mentioned.

Meng LI (Hong Kong Polytechnic University)

The Female Subjects at the Margin of Socialist China: Slum Women in Hong Ying's Daughter of the River

The paper analyses the slum women in Hong Ying's autobiographical novel *Daughter of the River*. The novel is set in the slum of the city of Chongqing, which is less presentable in the official profile of socialist China. In this *Bildungsroman*, Little Six's father-seeking journeys unravel miserable secret of her illegitimate birth and the bitter history of her family. In all cases, these journeys terminate by the betrayal or abandonment of the three male characters, all of which can be read as father figures to Little Six. In the meantime, the father-seeking journey is paralleled with journeys of self-discovery. A possible inspiration in this story derives from the nymphomaniac who is a minor character. Therefore, instead of extending the long-lasting academic attentions on the female protagonist Little Six, this paper draws attention to the nymphomaniac whose brief presence merits much in-depth exploration, notwithstanding that she only appears twice in the novel, once in Chapter Nine and the other in Chapter Seventeen. Presenting reflective juxtapositions of the life journeys of the nymphomaniac and women in the slums, mainly, the female protagonist Little Six and her mother, the paper examines how trauma and yearnings of these women at the margins of socialist China are projected onto the pathologized body of the nymphomaniac. The nymphomaniac will also be analyzed with concepts and theories echoing in post-modern interests, such as hauntology, Simmelian "the stranger" and abject. I will present how the nymphomaniac embodies individualism as well as ahistorical and anarchical freedom.

LI Yijun (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)

Behind Pema Tsenden: Ethnic Narration of Chinese Tibetan Young Screenwriters in the Amdo Region

The deceased writer and film director Pema Tsenden is regarded as an epoch-making personage for founding the 'New Wave of Tibetan Film.' The 'Wave' does not subside for Pema's leaving. In recent years, young screenwriters and directors have emerged from the grassland of his hometown. This article focuses on these young Tibetan authors in the Chinese Amdo Region. With the methodology of ethnographic survey and text analysis, it describes their general characteristics, explores the ways, purposes and situations of their creations, and analyzes the principles, features and implications of their works. On this basis, it aims to reveal the role of these Tibetan youths and their works in China's existing power structure and art industry system. Findings show that although these youths attempt to construct cultural subjectivity of Tibet on screen, they are not independent of existing power structure and industrial system in China, but rather integrate resources in intermediate positions in order to seek a delicate balance between 'the self' and 'the other.' They seek to construct a new cultural identity of the Tibetan ethnic group in an open context, so that it can be continuous in the negotiation with mainstreams. Activities of these Tibetan youths are distinct from the so-called "cultural activism" and "the activist imaginary," which are used to define the practices of indigenous people in North America and Australia. Instead, their works can be recognized as Deleuze's concept "minor literatures" or "minor films."

Daniela Licandro (University of Milan)

Affective Realism in Han Bangqing's Biographies of Shanghai Flowers

Han Bangqing's (1856-1894) novel *Biographies of Shanghai Flowers* (*Haishang hua liezhuan*, 1894) offers a vivid portrayal of the vicissitudes of courtesans and their clients against the backdrop of a modernizing Shanghai. Because of its attention to urban details, scholarly discussions of the novel emphasize its realistic impulse. Yet the "excess" of details undercuts the novel's realistic agenda. Focusing on the novel's representation and perception of space, this paper seeks to rethink the relationship between space and realism. Drawing upon anthropological and phenomenological approaches to space as "embodied," everyday life theory, and affect theory, it shows that space in the novel is a fluid, sensuous dimension that affects and is affected by human experience. Such a conceptualization of space restores the materiality of space and is key to apprehending the plurality of identities and cultural distinctions that characterize the novel's representation of Shanghai. Finally, a reflection on the structure of desire embedded in the complex linguistic and cultural make-up of the novel illuminates the text's construction of an "affective realism" addressing a common sensorium that, borrowing Lauren Berlant's words, can only be "attended to."

Hao-Chun LIN (Tsing Hua University)

How Do Agricultural Economic Policies Affect Regional Literature? Exploring the Radical Characteristics of Literature in Taiwan's Agricultural Capital

Yunlin, as the agricultural capital of Taiwan, has seen its literature deeply influenced by agricultural economic policies. By employing a theoretical framework based on Tim Cresswell's 'sense of place' concept, this study aims to elucidate the proactive endeavours of Yunlin writers, who used literature as a tool for social reform and advocacy in response to agricultural and economic policies from the 1930s to 2020. The study analyzes the works of Yunlin writers including Cai Qiu-Tong 蔡秋桐, a Taiwanese language writer during the Japanese rule period; Song Ze-lai 宋澤萊 and Lin Shuang-bu 林雙不, writers of post-war Taiwan Nativist Literature; Chung Wen-yin 鍾文音, female writer active in the 1990s as well as the winners of the Yunlin Culture and Arts Award from 2000 onward. Furthermore, this study seeks to illustrate how, over the span of nearly a century, the radical characteristics of literature in the agricultural capital Yunlin have emerged from societal issues such as class oppression, economic exploitation, and environmental sustainability. Taking it a step further, the study establishes the interconnectedness of Yunlin writers beyond literature, encompassing advocacy speeches, participation in the Peasant Movement, and their continuous contributions to the Yunlin Cultural and Arts Award.

Shuai LIU (University College Cork)

Cross-Border Journey of Political Advice Literature of Late Qing

Political advice literature refers to texts that provide guidance, strategies, and insights related to political activities and decision-making. In the Chinese context, these texts can take various forms, typically essays, treatises, or official memorials. By exploring how Chinese political advice literature has travelled across borders into the Anglophone world via translation, I am at contributing to a better understanding of late Qing Chinese literature in English translation. Chinese literature of late Qing times (1840-1912) and particularly political advice literature is relatively under-represented in translation. It was often perceived to be of lesser literary quality than other, usually classical Chinese, texts on philosophy and poetry. By analysing previously understudied sources, I hope to provide a window into how different literary, cultural, and political ideologies impact the process of cultural exchange via translation. Firstly, I will elucidate what kind of political advice texts were translated, when, why and by whom in order to understand the motives that governed these choices. Secondly, by understanding how texts were selected, I will offer insights into the images of China and the knowledge about Chinese politics that were espoused during this particular period. Thirdly, by presenting my analysis of some case studies, I will explore who the translations were intended for. Finally, I will compare my findings with those on translations from other genres and periods to point out crucial differences that make my research necessary.

LO Hsiu-Mei (National Chung Hsing University)

Leaving and Crossing the Boundary of the Female Body – The Body Experience and the Female Self in the Autobiography of Female Doctor Yang Buwei

Modern female doctor Yang Buwei (1889-1981) was the wife of well-known linguist and musician Zhao Yuanren (1892-1982). The parts of her two autobiographies, *Autobiography of a Chinese Woman* (1947) and *The Family of Chaos* (1973), are worth exploring about female body experience and female self. Firstly, Yang Buwei studied medicine in Japan and became a female obstetrician and gynecologist. Yang Buwei broke the requirements of traditional gender norms. She had not bound her feet since she was a child. After she became an adult, she studied medicine in Japan and became a doctor. She returned to China to open a women and children's clinic. However, Zhao Yuanren moved often after their marriage because of his teaching position, which caused her to not practice continuous. Female doctors also had difficulty taking care of themselves and their families. Secondly, Yang Buwei who went to Harvard University in the United States with Zhao Yuanren. married Yang Buwei consciously showed her autonomy over female's bodies after getting married. As an obstetrician and gynecologist, Yang Buwei translated and officially published the medical book on birth control by Mrs. Margaret Higgins Sanger when she was pregnant with her first child in the United States. However, comparing Yang Buwei's childbirth experience, he was unable to realize his vision of advocating production restrictions for some reason. Thirdly, when she was traveling with Zhao Yuanren to Germany for lectures, she inspected the birth control clinics in Germany so that she could open birth control clinics after returning to China to help multiparous women. At the same time, because Yang Buwei practiced the new style of marriage with almost no ceremony, when she traveled in Germany, she also observed from a female perspective the old and new marriages faced by the famous May Fourth scholars studying in Germany at that time, paying particular attention to the role of married women in marriage, such as Xu Zhimo's wife Zhang Youyi. Therefore, from her autobiography, we can see the transgression of modern female body experience and the construction of female self.

Shih-Lung LO (National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan)

The Unchanging Conscience in an Era of Change: On Li Jianwu's Translation of Gustave Flaubert's Short Story "A Simple Heart"

Li Jianwu, a distinguished Chinese playwright of the twentieth century, was renowned for translating a great number of French plays. His work encompassed the complete plays of Molière as well as those of nineteenth-century commercial playwrights like Victorien Sardou and Eugène Scribe, whose expertise in crafting well-structured plots and tension-filled narratives captivated Li. These translations and adaptations, particularly of well-made plays, were a vital source of income for Li during the Sino-Japanese War. However, his contributions to literature were not confined to theater translations. In 1936, Li published translations of three short stories by Gustave Flaubert, composed in the latter part of the author's life. These stories are acclaimed not for their plot development but for their meticulous sentence construction and detailed descriptions. While Li's translation of plays served as a financial backbone during the turbulent war years, the translation of Flaubert's short stories represented a different aspect of his career. These works raised questions about their role in cultural exchange and Li's personal journey as a translator. This paper aims to explore Li's unique approach in translating Flaubert's short stories, contrasting it with his adaptations of plays. Using Flaubert's "A Simple Heart" (*Un cœur simple*) as a case study, I will delve into Li's translation principles, including "preserving the truth," "conveying the spirit," and "maintaining integrity," as outlined in his writings. Through this analysis, I intend to shed light on the transcultural issues and the global circulation of literature in twentieth-century China.

Xuefei LUO (CUHK)

New Literature: A Fashion from 1919 to 1921

This paper contends that society held a fluid conceptualisation of what New Literature meant from 1919 to 1921 and investigates through contextual analysis how the "new" became popular and the increasing expansion of New Literature's definition. This paper traces the academic history of New Literature and scholars' constant arguments against what constitutes "New" in the first place and then regenerates the historical site where New Literature debuted. Specifically, this essay gives an overview of this new literary trend in the magazine industry and of arguments about the meaning of New Literature during the period. While New Literature became fashionable, its uncertain parameters also stirred up heated discussion. Since there was no standard national language, the majority of people saw vernacular literature and New Literature as identical, yet the question of what *Baihua* really is has always sparked fierce debate. The new editorial direction of the *Short Story Magazine* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao*) and readers' reactions in various media after these changes are then discussed in historical context. Although many traditional magazines wanted to re-'new' themselves as good commercial practice, behind the scenes there were hidden conflicts among proponents of New Literature, such as over editorial choices based on different understandings of what constituted "new," which suggests a dynamic and vibrant culture surrounding New Literature at that time. Finally, this study gives New Literature a transregional glance by representing its initial track of flowing from mainland China to other East Asian areas including Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.

Lara Maconi (CRCAO/INALCO, Paris)

Tibetan Past-Times: History, Memory and Identity in Chinese-Written Tibetan Contemporary Literature

Among the relevant features which have characterized Chinese-written Tibetan literature since the 1980s, one can find a pervasive attention to myths of identity, tradition, authenticity, history and, as a corollary of the latter, a crucial reflection on issues of memory, forgetfulness and amnesia. In this paper, I analyse how Tibetan history-related themes are used as fictional motifs in new-era Tibetan sinophone literature to convey present-day concerns with Tibetan identity. In the present day Sino-Tibetan political and cultural context where diglossia and concerns over cultural-loss are widely spread phenomena, exploring and reminiscing the little-known history of one's own people is not only a démarche of literary archaeology: it is an existential reflection on the meaning and role of being Tibetan in 'China's Tibet.' This paper is based on an ensemble of written and oral sources collected over the years during fieldwork researches in China and Tibet. These sources include first-hand interviews with Tibetan writers and publishers, along with published and unpublished literary works written in both Tibetan and Chinese by Tibetan writers. This paper more specifically focuses on three Sinophone writers – Yidam Tsering, Dondrup Wangbum and Woesser – and their distinctive ways of appropriating and integrating historical themes in their literary production.

Ambra Minoli (University of Warwick)

Shanghai as 'Paris of the East': Exotic and Uncanny Representations of Republican Shanghai

Although in the international imagination early 20th-century Shanghai is often described as the “Paris of the East,” not many studies have looked at how the city has gained such a reputation, particularly what role did the Sino-French encounters play in the construction of the Shanghai myth, and how has the city been portrayed in the literature as an exotic place that was foreign both to the French and the Chinese. Therefore, this paper will examine the literary representations of Republican Shanghai in the works of Chinese authors during the 1930s. In particular, I will analyse Mu Shiyong’s “Shanghai Foxtrot” and Zhang Ruogu’s *Yiguqingdiao* (異國情調 ‘Exotic Atmospheres’) to assess how the exotic literary portrayals of Shanghai by these authors influenced the city’s global image. By ‘exotic,’ this paper goes beyond the connotations associated with Edward Said’s concept of ‘Orientalism’ and the colonial mindset of Europe and North America. Instead, it is more closely related to Segalen’s concept of ‘Exoticism’ as a sensation of surprise or difference that arises from encountering something outside of our current experience, whether in space or time. In addition to exoticism, the theme of the uncanny will also be explored.

Tiago Nabais (CES, University of Coimbra)

Memory, Trauma and the Unspeakable in the Literary Avant-garde of the 1980's

Based on theoretical developments in the fields of Memory Studies and Trauma Theory, this paper revisits emblematic short-stories by the avant-garde writers Can Xue, Ma Yuan and Yu Hua. Despite the fact that the reforms launched by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970's included some initiatives meant to provide the victims of abuses during the Cultural Revolution with some measure of justice and reparation, this process was implemented in a top-down manner and after the historical resolution of 1981 the public debate about the past was all but terminated. During the first years of reforms new literary movements flourished, noticeably concerned with a record of the abuses and a meditation on the causes of the generalized violence. Despite important innovations, these movements were still somehow constrained by the realist aesthetics and the moral dichotomies that prevailed during the Maoist period. Shortly afterwards a new movement burst on the literary scene. These young writers dismantled many conventions of modern Chinese fiction, adopting an absurdist and violent aesthetic unsparing in moral ambiguities and open endings. I argue that this movement represents not just an expression of trauma and a desire to inscribe in public memory the abuses endured, but also an attempt to forge a new literary language – one that could account for the “unspeakable” and the “inexpressible” of the traumatic experience proposed by Dori Laub and Cathy Caruth – and thus open the way to a more effective contestation of the silences imposed by the state after the transition period.

William Chin Fung NG (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Arena of Violence: The Connections to Nationalism Through the Tensions of Violence Developed in the Buddhist Poetry of Late Qing and Republican China

China during the late Qing and Republican periods was repeatedly filled with a heightened nation-saving sentiment. This can be attributed to the transitions in political systems from the Qing Empire to the Republic of China, the subsequent occurrence of political events involving the legitimacy of governmental rule, and even wars with foreign regimes like Japan. In Buddhist poems written during that time, one of the political visions that appeared frequently is in fact that regarding the saving of nation, if necessary, through violence. However, with regard to violence, tensions arise in these poems when they acknowledge or respond to different events in different contexts. Buddhism inherently prohibits killing, but in fact there were many examples of Chinese Buddhists having been engaged in violence and even war throughout history. Besides, when it comes to the use of or participation in events involving violence, Chinese Buddhists at that time might respond favourably and support passionately, but of course there were also arguments against its deployment. Relevant events include the anti-Qing revolutions, and Shi Jianqiao’s 施劍翹 (1906–1979) assassination of the Zhili 直隸 Clique (Zhixi 直系) warlord Sun Chuanfang 孫傳芳 (1885–1935) in 1935, in order to avenge the death of Shi’s father ten years ago. By analysing how Buddhists commented or responded to the anti-Qing revolutions and Shi Jianqiao’s case respectively with their poems, this paper seeks to the relationship between Chinese Buddhism, nationalism, and violence is not only not oppositional, but actually very complex.

Shaw-Yu PAN (National Taiwan University)

Evolution and Apocalypse: The Late Qing Translations of H. G. Wells' Science Fiction

Compared to the impact of Jules Verne (1828-1905), the translation of H. G. Wells' (1866-1946) science fiction in the late Qing (1644-1912) period has been largely ignored. Yet, as this paper argues, it was Wells who exerted wider and deeper influence on modern Chinese literature. Verne offered entertaining and knowledgeable stories for children and juvenile, whereas Wells' disturbing imagination about apocalypse, the crisis of humanity, and the paradox of evolution/degeneration resonated deeply with the concerns of modern Chinese intellectuals. The earliest Chinese versions of Wells' science fiction, *Cangsang bian* 滄桑變 (*The Time Machine*) and *Huoxing yu diqiu zhi zhanzheng* 火星與地球之戰爭 (*The War of the Worlds*), were both translated by Yang Xinyi 楊心一 (1889-1916) and serialized in *Shenzhou ribao* 神州日報 in 1907. What was Yang's translation strategy? How did he render Wells' vision of future and fin-de-siècle aesthetics? While the Martian attack of England made for a convenient metaphor for the European intrusion of China, how did Yang mediate Wells' Eurocentric narrative? More intriguingly, how did Wells' apocalyptic predictions fit into a revolutionary newspaper like *Shenzhou ribao*? How did Yang appropriate the late Qing revolutionary thinker Zhang Taiyan's (1869-1936) *Jufen jinhualun* 俱分進化論 (the two-way evolution) in his translation of Wells' stories? This paper thus demonstrates how Wells' ideas of evolution and apocalypse were transformed in global cultural flows, and how his works in translation formulated complex ways of thinking about China's future.

Gaia Perini (University of Bologna)

The "Dongbei Renaissance": The Literary Works of Shuang Xuetao and Li Tie as a Site for Rethinking Chinese Modernization

In the expression "Dongbei Renaissance," the toponym "Dongbei" still denotes the area of Northeast China, but it refers also and above all to a long chain of historical events: after playing a key role in the Sino-Japanese conflict, this border region became China's industrial heartland and during the Mao era its steel and petrochemical sectors were the pride of socialist planned economy. Dongbei was the cradle of the Angang constitution and a model for the *danwei* system, but, for this same reason, it was hit hardest by the industrial restructuring and mass layoffs due to market reforms in the 1990s. The writers who now belong to the so-called "renaissance" are retelling this traumatic past and reassembling its shattered pieces. Being born mostly in the 1980s, for them it is more a matter of rethinking critically (*fansi* 反思) than of representing (*fanying* 反映) a reality they experienced only indirectly. My paper will focus on two case studies: the celebrated novelist Shuang Xuetao and the less known Li Tie. If the latter in his trilogy *Jinxiu* still offers a linear historical account, filled with nostalgia for the golden age of state-run enterprises, the former became famous thanks to his highly experimental, polyphonic fiction with multiple narratives, as smashed as the "iron rice bowl" of the old work units. However, despite their differences, they both write literature to address the loss of historical memory and their works might help us rethink the project of Chinese modernity.

Federico Picerni (University of Bologna)

Ultra-Unreal, Ultra-Fictional: Ning Ken's Literary Probing Into the (Un)Reality of Postsocialist China

In a time characterised by the seeming fragmentation and increasing absurdity of the real, several Chinese writers have resorted to non-realist forms to reinvent literature's ability to engage with the contradictory reality of postsocialist China. In his 2014 novel, *San ge sanhongzou*, Ning Ken employs an experimental narrative technique to ponder on the relation between power, art, desire, and capital. Through three interconnected stories, set in the present day, the 1990s, and the 1980s, Ning Ken explores the sense of apparent irrationality and unfathomability produced by the transition from the high culture fever of the 1980s to a "fever for profit," the latter being characterized by the rapid pace of economic development and societal changes, but also by rampant corruption, abuse, and loss of ethical values. Ning Ken calls his aesthetic approach *chaohuan*, usually translated as "ultra-unreal," both an aesthetic approach based on exaggerating the absurdities of the real and simultaneously a metaliterary technique to test literature's ability to represent reality. This paper approaches Ning Ken's literary experiment by placing it within the wider frame of contemporary "pararealist" (Fumian) narratives. Building on the notion of realism as method (Fischer), it suggests that Ning Ken's engagement with social reality further proves that pararealism is not a detachment from a literary exploration of the real, but an attempt to find different, experimental ways to do so. In conclusion, then, the paper suggests that Ning Ken's *chaohuan* is part of the complex history of Chinese critical realism (Anderson), and rediscusses its translation as "ultra-fictional."

Martina Renata Prosperi (University of Wrocław)

Women, Mothers, Wombs and Ghosts: An Interdisciplinary Reflection on the Novel Jinhui 锦灰 (Sheng Keyi, 2018) and its Resemantization of the Feminine

The paper analyzes the novel *Jinhui* 锦灰 (2018) by Sheng Keyi 盛可以 (1973-). Its protagonist, a metaphor-addict woman journalist called Yao Minzhu, is locked up in a clinic for the treatment of “rhetorical disorders,” but refuses treatment and ends up the victim of therapeutic doggedness. The narrative seems to begin with her death, or the loss of consciousness that precedes it, and tells a dreamlike journey, through the places and stories of a town called Fuyinzhen. If the journey is, for the protagonist, an opportunity to reappropriate her memories and re-imagine those of her parents, it is also the pretext, for the author, to construct new and powerful metaphors of Chinese history, as well as to problematize the position of women – in the recent past, as in today’s society – thorough the resemantization of their bodies and roles. The textual analysis features two different and complementary methodological paradigms: an anthropological one, i.e. the archetypal structures of the Chinese imaginary, as identified and described by Sun Chaoying on the basis of G. Durand’s studies; and a psychoanalytic paradigm, i.e. the reflections proposed by Massimo Recalcati around the concepts of taboo and *lalangue*. Through this dual approach, the analysis aims to demonstrate how the metaphorical device allowing Sheng’s narration to deviate from the discourse of reality though continuing to refer to it – indeed, referring to it in an even more *immediate way*, that is, not *mediated* by any symbolic spacing – is to be considered the sine-qua-non of the above-said resemantization.

Giulia Rampolla (University of International Studies in Rome)

An Endangered Arcane Ecosystem: The Representation of the Woodlands in Chen Yingsong’s novel The Forest is Silent

This paper investigates the representation of the forest in the novel *Senlin chenmo* 森林沉默 (2019), by the Chinese writer Chen Yingsong 陈应松 (1956). In exploring the uneasy relationship between humans and the natural environment under the destructive impact of capitalism, this novel portrays the forest as a living, dynamic and sentient entity filled with mystery, in which all beings and natural phenomena are interconnected and the boundaries between the real and the unreal are blurred. However, human greed, epitomised by the construction of an airport to attract lucrative activities, disrupts the pristine wilderness of this forest and the peacefulness of its creatures, including local people. Through the lens of posthuman ecocriticism and critical plant and animal studies, considered as interrelated frameworks that challenge anthropocentrism and the category of ‘human,’ this paper attempts to shed light on the ways in which this particular representation of the forest destabilises common assumptions about the intrinsic passivity of nature and questions the nature-culture divide. This paper argues that the detailed descriptions of the luxuriant vegetation, as well as of animals, insects and natural phenomena in this novel foreground the forest as an embodiment of nonhuman otherness, while the supernatural and mythological elements underpin the unfathomable power of nature, as opposed to the reality of the ecological crisis. In creating this fictional forest, which remains silent in front of plunder and exploitation, the writer engages with key issues of global modernity, such as the clash between progress and environmental conservation.

Kyle Shernuk (Georgetown University)

Sinoscapes: Ways of Being Ethnic in Contemporary Chinese-Language Literatures

This paper will introduce a new framework for considering the relationship between ethnicity, language, and Chineseness in contemporary Chinese-language literatures, namely Sinoscapes. My argument builds on the wealth of excellent, single-group studies of different ethnic groups from around the Sinosphere to identify common identity-building or expressive techniques that will contribute to a theory of ethnicity that is distinct to Chinese studies. To demonstrate the potential of this model, I will offer a comparative example showcasing works by the Indigenous Tao, Taiwan writer Syaman Rapongan and rGyalrong-Tibetan, Chinese writer Alai and arguing that their shared use of standpoint epistemology generates new possibilities for Sinophone ethnic expression.

Nick Stember (National Museum of Denmark)

Holding Out for a Hero: The Production, Distribution, and Reception of Xianxia Fiction in Contemporary Chinese Language Media

In this paper I look at the production, distribution, and reception of *xianxia* or “immortal hero” fiction in contemporary Chinese language media, considering the adaptation of online serialized novels into film and television series, in addition to comics, sticker packs, and other less studied mediums. The primary objective of this paper is to present a typology of common narrative tropes (and criticism thereof), the better to understand the close interaction between writers and readers of immortal hero fiction; second is to understand the material conditions for its production. What qualities, in other words, make a story “good” or “bad”? And how has the “taste” of readers, in tandem with government regulations, influenced producers and distributors of immortal hero fiction? Drawing on interviews with both fans and creators, publishers, production studio executives, and others involved in the immortal hero fiction industry, answers to the above questions are provided. In paying attention to the subjective qualities of reception and the objective qualities of material conditions, this paper points to new directions in the study of popular culture in the contemporary Sinosphere, which are of particular importance given its increasingly transnational engagements with fans in not only Asia, but also in Europe and beyond.

Josh Stenberg (University of Sydney)

Floating Abroad: Sino-Southeast Asian Literature and the Rootlessness Metaphor

This paper investigates how Sinophone literature in maritime Southeast Asia has depicted and shaped the identities of Chinese communities in the region. To do this, it identifies the predominance of metaphors surrounding “rootlessness” and “floating.” These metaphors, regularly deployed by authors of the colonial and Cold War periods create a Sinocentrism to limit the reality and authenticity of overseas communities. I will focus on 20th century works by Philippine and Indonesian Sinophone authors to detail the evolution of this metaphor, its contribution to persistent Sinocentrism, and its construction of ethnic Chinese identities both for consumption in Chinese metropolises and in the community themselves.

Anton Terhechte (Free University of Berlin)

On and Off the Shelves: Managing Islamic Prints in the People’s Republic since the Reform Era

While the production and circulation of literature on Islam has become tightly regulated in China in recent years and many books have ‘disappeared’ from the shelves (*xia jia*), following the end of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese Muslims witnessed a period of relative openness and tolerance – a rejuvenation of religious life. For about two to three decades a rather lax regulation policy coincided with an unprecedented abundance of literature filling the shelves of bookstores, libraries, mosques and homes. This project attempts to shed light on this recent and understudied period through the lens of the bookshelf. Probing the ‘bookshelf approach’ will help shed light on the role literature played in the (re)assessment of Islam’s place in a Chinese context of modernization and negotiations of Muslim communities’ identity, narratives and representations; thereby, exploring the knowledge produced from the intersection between the global spread of a modern religion-concept and print capitalism, modern Chinese literary culture and Islamic textual traditions. Publications were as diverse in content as they were in their respective means of production and distribution: ranging from the more official and regulated academic fields (*guanfang*; *xueshu*), to ‘inner’ Islamic materials and discourses (*neibu*), and, most interestingly, the almost fully unregulated local histories, journals and novels of the ‘awakened’ (Muslim) public (*minjian*). This study will help uncover and disentangle the complex affiliations and contradictory motives of the actors involved and the overlapping spheres they move and act in between.

Tim Thurston (University of Leeds)

From Bards to Bearers: The Shifting Responsibilities of Tibetan Bards in China's ICH Regime

The Tibetan Gesar epic, sometimes promoted as the longest epic in the world, was inscribed on the “UNESCO List of the Representative ICH of Humanity” in 2009. Since then, the Chinese government has devoted a tremendous amount of human and financial capital to ‘safeguarding’ the tradition, with particular emphasis on the divinely inspired bards who perform it. A significant part of this is the official identification of ‘authentic’ bards. In the process, these men—and they are almost all men—have changed from being drungken ‘bards’ to jyundzinpa ‘bearers’ or ‘inheritors’. The identification comes with new responsibilities, expectations, and benefits. Based on narratives from bards and government workers in Qinghai Province’s Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, this paper examines the processes and consequences of the work to identify the divinely inspired bards, and recognize them as “bearers” or “inheritors.” I show how this involves bringing new actors into the tradition, and precipitates an epistemic shift that brings these bards into contact with competing epistemologies of authenticity, and with new discourses. These, in turn, shape the presents and futures of these bards, their communities, and their epic.

TSAI Mei-Tzu (National Cheng Kung University)

Hardship, Wandering, and Adventure – The Evolution of Themes and Literary Styles in the Writings of Chinese Laborers in Europe During World War I

Following the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Chinese government resolved to send laborers, instead of soldiers, to participate in the fighting, with an estimated 140,000 Chinese laborers in Europe. They documented their lives in Europe by means of letters, diaries, and memoirs. Previously in late Qing Dynasty, novels serialized in newspapers mostly depicted oppressed Chinese laborers known as piglets. This paper explores the thematic and stylistic changes in the writings of Chinese laborers during World War I based on two works. One is *Huagong Ji (Records of Chinese Laborers)*, written in a note-taking style by Sun Gan. It is the “European Odyssey” of a group of Chinese laborers. They encounter the astonishments of the modern world while traveling across the Pacific, Atlantic, and English Channel to reach the French battlefield. The other is *Yi ge Huagong de Riji (A Diary of a Chinese Laborer)*, a series of Western-style monologue letters authored by Li Jinfa, who later became a symbolist poet in China. It tells the story of a Chinese worker embarking on a European journey with adventures ranging from maintaining fortifications to pursuing urban entertainments, suffering from syphilophobia, winning the lottery, to gambling away all his savings. Unlike the writings of late Qing portraying male Chinese laborers as unmasculine, the two works focus on the romantic engagement of Chinese laborers with the lower-class women in Europe. The writings of Chinese laborers represent a specific perspective of marginal people and the phenomenon of cross-cultural exchange in a particular era.

Wai TSUI (CUHK)

Constructing Identity Through Traditional Literary Writing in the Midst of War: The Objectives and Publishing Strategies of Wenshi jikan 文史季刊 (Quarterly of Literature and History)

Wenshi jikan (Quarterly of Literature and History) is a journal by the National Zhongzheng University 國立中正大學 from 1941 to 1942 in Jiangxi. The chief editor is Wang Yi 王易, a scholar belongs to the group of Xueheng 學衡. Unlike its counterparts, the *Quarterly* has devoted more than half of its pages into publishing literary writings, all which are in traditional form, i.e. prose in *wenyan*, regulated prose, traditional poems and *ci* poetry. Even when compared to journals of the occupied area which used traditional literary writing to promote “peace” and whitewash the Japanese rule, the literary writings published in the *Quarterly* has drastically different objectives, themes and styles. Jiangxi, where the *Quarterly* was published, has neither been a fully occupied area nor it is as safe as Chongqing. It was constantly facing the threats of invasion, thus the contributors and the editors worked under an environment full of instabilities and anxiety. The article would analyze how and why traditional forms of literature are presented in the *Quarterly*. These works are not only expressing in a lyrical way of individuals’ emotional reaction in this horrible period, but also demonstrating how the *Quarterly* was caught between old and new, war and peace, artistic and practical value. It is hoped to explore the historical and literary significance of this journal.

Dušan Vávra (Masaryk University)

Self-Loathing in Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction

This paper explores the *topos* of “self-loathing” in contemporary Chinese science fiction. The notion of “self-loathing” follows Geremie Barmé’s description of the term. Barmé stresses the double nature of Chinese self-loathing tradition: On one hand, it is posed as a humiliating recognition of China’s backwardness with the implication that the true reason for this state is a deep-rooted corruption of Chinese culture. On the other hand, the typically extreme imagery of the Chinese self-loathing tradition reveals a patriotic zeal, a prevalent sense of national uniqueness, and an urge for the nation’s renewal. There are two typical references of the Chinese self-loathing. One is the corruption of pre-modern Chinese culture and society, the second one is the Cultural Revolution. This paper argues that another self-loathing reference point can be detected in what is perhaps an unlikely medium – in contemporary Chinese science fiction. It is argued that in Chinese sci-fi we encounter a criticism of contemporary Chinese society and politics, though veiled as fictional dystopic visions. The paper focuses on several works by Han Song with briefer references to other writers. It is argued that the criticism of China in these works can often be plausibly read in the self-loathing tradition described above. The paper concludes that despite the grandeur of China’s rise in the 21st c. (in both reality and sci-fi works) the contemporary authors express the same strange sentiment with the earlier authors of the 20th c. – the problem of China’s monstrosity vis-à-vis modernity.

Yoke Kuan WONG (CUHK)

The Complexity of Political and Cultural Freedom: On the Literary Education Dissemination of Union Press in Hong Kong During the Cold War Period

This paper explores on the construction of “Modern Literature” in the context of Hong Kong education during the Cold War period, when the colonial government sought to cease the influence of Taiwan Nationalist and China Communism through textbook’s content and syllabus. Hong Kong became a battleground for competing ideologies of China, Taiwan and U.S after World War II period, which depict a space of political freedom. However, despite various efforts from the colonial government to review and sought to change education system to be apolitical and neutrality, textbook published by private publications were still instilled with particular ideology and used by students in Middle school. This paper shall use textbook published by Union Press for Middle School students as a case study to discuss on the interpretation of political freedom in Hong Kong and how does it affect the formation of Modern Literature compare to China and Taiwan. Union Press were created by a group of intellectuals who fled to Hong Kong after the communist came to power in mainland China in 1949. They were members of The Third Force alliance and most of their publication were supported by U.S non-profit organization funded by CIA, The Asia Foundation, who sought to contain Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. By examining on the selection of Modern Literature texts from Union Press’s textbook and parallel with colonial government education policy, this paper explores the complexity of the meaning of freedom which intertwined with Hong Kong colonial government, U.S cultural cold war and intellectuals’ autonomy.

Xiaobin YANG (Academia Sinica)

Critical Poetics of Excessive Language and Subjectivity: Off the Roll, Poetry+ Magazine as an Example

Off the Roll, Poetry+ (*Weishengzhi shikan*) is one of the most influential poetry journals published in Taiwan over the past twenty years. Edited by poet Hong Hong, *Off the Roll, Poetry+* manifests its unique poetic style, facing social issues with critical perspectives. Based on Lacanian perspective on language and subjectivity, this paper will focus on the concept of excess as reflecting the overall style of the poems published in the journal. First, on the level of language, surplus signifiers construct the fundamental style of *Off the Roll, Poetry+*, ironically displaying the absurd nature of the (rhetorical) symbolic order that supports reality. Then, the subjective voice can be detected as excessive, manifesting the lyrical subject unfitting to himself/herself. In other words, the lyrical subjectivity per se becomes a split one, always containing something surplus to its proportionate nature. Ultimately, we find that, in many poems, it is the sociocultural Other (institution, law, morality, etc.) that shows excessive characteristics, meaning that the big Other cannot but reveals its monstrous, traumatizing feature. Here, Lacan’s notion of “(surplus) jouissance” may be linked to Bataille’s notion of “expenditure,” indicating the transgressive affect expressed in the poems that disrupts the existing social order from within. In this paper, I will discuss poems by such Taiwan poets as Hong Hong, Ling Yu, Jing Xianghai, Lin Wanyu, Xiang Ming, A Mi, Liao Ren, Pan Jiabin, Lin Weiyun, among others.

Michelle Jia YE (CUHK)

The Idea of Literature in Kwong Ki Chiu's English-Chinese Dictionaries in Global Circulation in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

The idea of literature in Kwong Ki Chiu's English-Chinese dictionaries in global circulation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries This paper explores the concept of literature as it emerged in the English-Chinese dictionaries created by Kwong Ki Chiu (1836-1891), a Cantonese reformist lexicographer and influential figure in the Chinese Education Mission (1872-1881). Spanning the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Kwong's dictionaries were produced during his life and career in locations such as Canton, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Australia, and the U.S. These dictionaries reflected Kwong's aspirations to connect the Chinese middle merchant class to the wider world through language learning, and to elevate language acquisition from a practical necessity to a means of cultivating taste and enriching thought. The inclusion of an increasing number of lexical entries related to literature in these dictionaries reveals Kwong's ambition to engage the Southern bilingual merchant class in the literary realm of China, which was soon to become dominant and pioneering. Notable entries include derivatives of "literate" (e.g. literacy, literature, literati) and terms related to literature (e.g. style, rhyme, essay, poetry) in the English-Chinese lexicon. Additionally, the Chinese-English lexicon contained miscellaneous glossary lists that specified the things, professions, and institutions integral to the making and being of a literary person. Alongside the expanding wordlist related to literature, there was also a significant increase in abstract terms related to philosophy. This suggests that Kwong's intended readership had evolved into self-aware bilingual thinkers who would occupy higher positions within the Chinese cultural hierarchy. This paper argues that it was through this upward movement of Chinese English-language learners that the idea of literature became less restricted to traditional high literature and more inclusive of the general literate public.



PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF THOUGHT

PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF THOUGHT

Wolfgang Behr (University of Zurich)

Lost Along the Way: The Etymology of Dào 道 and Why It Matters for Warring States Philosophy and Literature

Despite the centrality of the term in Early China, reflected in A.C. Graham's famous 1989 book title *Disputers of the Dao*, its etymology has not been conclusively clarified. Proposals preceding E.G. Pulleyblank's (1962) reconstruction of lateral initials (whence 道 < OC *l'uʔ-s), were all led astray by the assumption that *dào* had a dental initial like in Middle Chinese. Goldin (1994) acknowledged the lateral theory and first clarified the relationship of *dào* 'way' and 導 *dǎo* 'lead' with their phonophoric *shǒu* 首 *l'uʔ 'head,' but failed to see that *dào* is derived from *yóu* 由 '(move) along' (Wèi Péiquán 2009). This root was, so to speak, "lost along the way" to the philosophical harnessing of *dào* during the Warring States period, which eclipsed the motion verb background. The crucial connection for an understanding of the word's external cognates in Sino-Tibetan was therefore obscured. More importantly, it also prevented recognizing the prolific juxtapositions – sometimes playful, often serious – of the two words in paronomastic forms of argumentation. These have to be judged as instances of *figura etymologica* (also with 誘 'lead, entice,' 述~術 'follow; technique,' 'follow; path,' all *-lu-) and will be the focus of the talk, drawing on examples from transmitted and excavated texts. Special attention will be given to a recurrent rhetorical figure which introduces a quasi-protasis by 由 *lu and posits the 'way' 道 *l'uʔ-s, with or without further modifiers, as the consequence which "came along with it."

Ivana Buljan (University of Zagreb)

The Status of Work and Labour in Early China

In most early cultures, work and labour were regarded as human activities fundamental for securing human life. As natural necessities, the importance of work and labour was unquestioned. Nevertheless, the status and position of work within human activity, and how work was conceptualized, sharply differed. This presentation explores philosophical approaches and attitudes toward work and labour in early China, which is a rather overlooked topic that has not attracted broader scholarly interest. It argues that early Chinese philosophers highly valued work while criticizing the enjoyment of idleness, laziness, and nonchalance. They acknowledged the central role of work in the state, linking it with the utopian idea of "great peace" (*tai ping*). Many hypothetical experiments described what would happen if people did not attend to their work. In particular, these philosophers focused on the concept of achievement/merit (*gong*). In this context, they discussed questions such as who should work, how one should work, how work should be encouraged, and how the labour should be divided. Their discussions of work display a sharp distinction between governing and working, and between human and animal. In addition to the fact that work was seen as necessary, in some texts it was also seen as a path towards human fulfilment.

Lea Cantor (University of Cambridge)

Figurative Language in the Zhuangzi as a Strategy for Expressing Scepticism

This paper examines the relationship between Zhuangzi's use of figurative language and his strategies for expressing scepticism. I consider central programmatic passages of the *Zhuangzi* (especially Chapters 27 and 33) that offer explicit reflections on Zhuangzi's use of figurative language and idiosyncratic rhetorical manoeuvres, and their relevance to what might be called 'indirect argumentation'. By 'indirect argumentation' I mean the use of figurative language, rhetorical devices, as well as framing and compositional features of the text that make oblique philosophical points, for instance regarding the limits of what can (and cannot) be known, and of what can be said of such limits. I further suggest that these reflections are often presented noncommittally through literary masks or personae, as well as through Zhuangzi's signature 'double-question form.' They are also communicated in ways that are often paradoxical, ambiguous, and/or avowedly tentative. While these are relatively well-known features of the *Zhuangzi*, I argue that scholars have underestimated the extent to which Zhuangzi's sophisticated use of figurative language (including analogies) and noncommittal expression of arguments and theses allow him to preempt a major objection to his sceptical stance: namely, that his reliance on words and arguments apparently commits him to theses.

Yim Fong CHAN (University of Basel)

Defending His Vision of Social Progress: Liang Shuming's Resilience During the "Criticize Lin, Criticize Kong Campaign" in 1974

In the context of Liang Shuming's (1893-1988) resistance during the "Criticize Lin, Criticize Kong Campaign," existing studies emphasize his courage in upholding traditional cultural values under extreme political circumstances. This presentation expands on this analysis, asserting that Liang's resistance was primarily motivated by his dedication to safeguarding his interpretation of Marxism and realizing his Confucian vision of "social progress." Liang's concept of social progress involves the dual manifestation of *wuli* 物理 and *qingli* 情理, representing the objective principle of social development and subjective moral judgments, respectively. He envisioned that these elements, when manifested in the advanced phase of social development, would yield a fair, just, and rational society. As Liang was influenced by the prevailing political ideology, he firmly believed in the exclusive validity of "scientific socialism" as advocated by Marx and Engels. He attributed it with an authoritative status akin to natural sciences, representing "wuli." Simultaneously, he valued traditional Chinese culture, particularly the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, as the embodiment of "qingli." Liang anticipated that Confucian teachings would serve as invaluable intellectual resources for humanity to lead fulfilling lives. In light of Liang's vision of "social progress," this presentation argues that his response to the political campaign went beyond preserving traditional culture. It encapsulated his role as a Confucian intellectual on a mission closely tied to his scholar-official mentality. Propelled by this mentality, his reaction was a nuanced interplay between preserving cultural heritage, upholding his understanding of Marxist ideals, and defending a vision for societal progress.

Yao-Cheng CHANG (KU Leuven)

Revisiting Mozi's Argumentative Methods: Beyond the Three Criteria

The *Mozi*, a seminal text of ancient Chinese thought, has long been studied for its distinctive three criteria of argumentation, referred to as *san biao* 三表 or *san fa* 三法, as presented in its "Feiming" 非命 chapters. These three criteria involved consulting historical records handed down by ancient kings, considering the perceptual experiences of ordinary people, and assessing the practical benefits in politics. They were used as benchmarks to evaluate the appropriateness of any given claim. This paper aims to explore the nuanced use of these standards in Mozi's arguments and shed light on a recurring discourse strategy used in the "Mingui" 明鬼 chapter. The primary objective of this study is to scrutinize how the *Mozi* employed diverse criteria while advocating the existence of ghosts and spirits. Importantly, the paper challenges the long-held notion that the *Mozi* rigidly adhered to a fixed set of three criteria, as commonly believed since the 20th century. Instead, it seeks to present a more nuanced understanding of Mozi's approach to argumentation. When faced with doubts regarding the reliability of ordinary people's testimonies, the *Mozi* seamlessly transitions to historical records of ancient sage kings, thus elevating the credibility of its claims. This "transitional standard" synthesizes eyewitness accounts with the authority of respected rulers, adding complexity to the conventional understanding of Mozi's argumentative approach. By analyzing Mozi's strategic use of various criteria, this research illuminates the subtleties in his argumentation and contributes to a deeper understanding of the *Mozi*'s intellectual framework.

Bart Dessen (Ghent University)

“*Yi Fofa piping shehui zhuyi*” (以佛法批評社會主義; *Criticizing Socialism with Buddhism*)

“*Yi Fofa piping shehui zhuyi*” (以佛法批評社會主義; *Criticizing Socialism with Buddhism*) is an article written by the famous Buddhist reformer Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), and published in the 3rd issue of the 6th volume of 1925 of «*Haichao Yin*» (海潮音; *Sound of the Sea Tide*), the journal Taixu has founded in 1920. In this paper, I will discuss Taixu’s critique of socialism as compared to his former enthusiasm for the ideas of the ‘Christian socialist’ Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon’s (1760–1825). For assessing the latter, de Saint-Simon’s *Nouveau Christianisme – Dialogues entre un conservateur et un novateur – Premier dialogue* (New Christianity – Dialogues between a conservative and an innovator – First dialogue), an incomplete work published in April 1825, and his *De l’organisation social, fragments d’un ouvrage inédit* (On social organisation, fragments of an unedited work), a work de Saint-Simon wrote in his younger years, but that was published only posthumously, will be scrutinized.

John Donegan-Cross (University of Cambridge)

The Development and Range of the Image of Flight in the Songs of Chu

The earliest poems of the *Songs of Chu* 楚辭 are the ‘Nine Songs’ 九歌. They detail communion between shaman and god, and the primary vehicle of their communion is flight. In these early poems, therefore, flight is already speaking not only literally of the movement, but also of touching with the otherworldly, escaping the ordinariness of the world, of sharing in great virtue and power. This paper traces how this otherworldly image of flight becomes associated in the collection to the lives of birds, and how the poets empathise with birds, and use this empathy for poetic effect. It explores how the virtues shared between gods and poets in the ‘Nine Songs’ are ascribed to birds that fly high and far, and how the avian world is ordered into good and bad characters and characteristics. In light of this central theme, it also explores how other metaphors extracted from avian life – capture, ensnarement, domestication, and song – work their way into the poems.

Hajni Elias (University of Cambridge)

Laments for the Young in Eastern Han Memorial and Material Culture

This paper will explore some of the rare depictions of children found in early material culture and on commemorative stelae erected for those who died at a young age. Through the examination of Eastern Han period (25-220 CE) pictorial brick tiles placed in tombs showing scenes of children at play and stelae inscriptions that record deep grief for the premature loss of a child, we examine how personal bereavement was given expression, and discuss some of the factors that may have contributed to the visibility of the family’s mourning. While the language and imagery used in commemorative stelae of this type may follow Confucian ideals, we find that there was increasing allowance for the expression of family grief that was more personal and less formulaic. Bearing in mind that the Eastern Han was a period that witnessed the rise of the powerful local magnate clans (*haozu* 豪族), the loss of a precious family member would have triggered mourning that respected children regardless of age and gender.

Flavia Xi FANG (University of Cambridge)

Smell and Virtue: Olfactory Metaphors in Medieval China

The “scent of virtue” is a theme recurrent in various genres of medieval Chinese texts. Just as smells were imbued with moral meanings, the virtues of people and things were also perceived as emitting fragrant or foul odours. Grounded in early Chinese literary tradition as well as religious thought, the olfactory metaphor for virtue has endured over time. This paper argues that this expression was not merely a literary convention; instead, it reveals patterns of medieval Chinese mentalities, informing a particular olfactory sensibility and aesthetic inclination. Furthermore, this association between scent and morality not only influenced how people at the time articulated olfactory perceptions, but also the ways in which they engaged with olfactory practices.

Andrej Fech (Hong Kong Baptist University)

Healing through Desire: Reflections on the Manuscript “Fan yin” 反淫

In this presentation, I investigate the main philosophical themes of the newly discovered manuscript “Fan yin.” Particularly, I am interested in the relationship between the “ethereal soul” (*hun* 魂) and the “corporeal soul” (*po* 魄). The text is structured as a dialogue between these two souls. *Hun* is depicted as a master, having knowledge of the Way (*dao* 道), while *po* is portrayed as occupying an inferior position and, moreover, suffering from an illness of unspecified nature. The portrayed encounter is, therefore, an instance of instruction and, also, of medical treatment. After several unsuccessful attempts to improve *po*’s condition by presenting vivid depictions of enticing scenes and activities, *hun* delivers a poetic representation of the Way, using language reminiscent of the *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi*. Only then is *po* able to fully recover. In my discussion, I first look into the different stages (13 in total) of *po*’s path to convalescence, and compare them to similar passages in the received literature; following that, I investigate the ostensible curative function of the highest philosophical principles; then I examine the significance of the strict hierarchy between *hun* and *po* in the context of the mind-body relationship and the alleged mind-body holism in Chinese philosophy. Last but not least, the “Fan yin” is one of the earliest representatives of rhapsodies (*fu* 賦); thus, I investigate how the manuscript, with its lavish depictions of the Way, corresponds to theories of the *fu*’s curative function and mimetic representation.

Katerina Gajdosova (Charles University Prague)

Rules that Be: Relevance of Early Chinese Texts for Contemporary Ethical Discourse

The notion of *fa* 法 has become central to the discourse on rulership towards the end of the Warring States period, along with the notion of *dao* 道. Texts such as *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 see the rules as the basis of replicability and reliability in the ever-changing world. A state with a fail-proof system of rules can withstand any new challenges, including an unstable ruler. The problem, partly thematized in the *Hanfeizi* but even more so in the Mawangdui manuscript *Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經, is: who makes the rules, or in other words, whether they are established at will, or arise from the broader cosmic context. The presentation will show that this problem cannot be productively treated within the dichotomy between natural and artificial law, and it will offer an alternative view based on the texts, in which the act of imposing rules is regarded as a self-replicating and self-structuring process of cosmic evolution. The system of rules is then no longer conceived as a well-adjusted machine but as a living system open to, as well as generating radical novelty. The presentation will further develop the implications of this view for the discourse on rulemaking in contemporary ethics.

Joachim Gentz (University of Edinburgh)

A Glimpse into the Black Box. Applying Translation Studies Theory to Translations of Classical Chinese Texts

When queried about their connection to Translation Studies, most classical sinologists would likely concede that they have never delved into it, even though translation is integral to their work. This paper endeavours to apply Translation Studies concepts to reflect, in more theoretical terms, on the translation strategies and methods employed by Sarah Queen and myself during a two-year team translation project (2021-2023) in which we produced a ca. 1000 pp. long “thick translation” of the *Gongyang zhuan* and the *Guliang zhuan*. The paper initiates with an analysis of the repercussions of team translation—a topic seldom explored in Translation Studies. It contends that team translation can serve as a method to enhance control over the intuitive cognitive processes within the translator’s mind, often referred to by psycholinguists as the “black box.” This approach aims to mitigate unconscious interventions, such as those rooted in social, cultural, academic, or gendered habitus, and thereby reduce the determinateness of the translation by subjective individual and biographical factors through constant negotiations between members of the translation team. In our case this team consisted of an American female Jewish scholar and a German male Protestant scholar. Proceeding, the paper delves into discussions on emic and etic approaches, explaining how domestication and foreignization, clarification, explicitation, and expansion were selectively applied or avoided in the pursuit of what Appiah (1993) has termed a “thick translation” aimed at an etic English readership.

Yegor Grebnev (BNU-HKBU United International College)

Institutional Aspects of Proto-Daoism as a Scriptural Tradition in Excavated Texts

In Early China studies, Daoism is predominantly discussed as a philosophical phenomenon. It is assumed that the institutional structures of religious Daoism somehow coalesced around the Daoist philosophy only toward the Eastern Han period. During the last three decades, this consensus has been questioned, in particular, in the important studies of Harold Roth and Gil Raz, who have shown that some Daoist religious practices had already developed before the early empires. In this paper, I aim to bring more evidence to the discussion by showing that certain institutional structures of religious Daoism can already be seen in Warring States and Western Han excavated sources. I particularly focus on the Tsinghua University, Shanghai Museum, and the Yinqueshan manuscript collections. Taking insight from Anna Seidel’s research, I group my observations into the following aspects: 1) communal identity centered on partly mythologized transmission lineages; 2) relationship of hierarchical subordination within the community; 3) mimetic models of master-to-student textual transmission embedded in texts; 4) ideal of a symbiotic and complementary relationship between the leader of the community and the sovereign. The institutional structures or religious Daoism appear to have been built on the foundation of diverse communities of the Warring States and Han, not only those narrowly committed to the ideas of the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*. The tendency to disproportionately prioritize intellectual-historical aspects should be reconsidered, because durable institutional structures are obviously important in the history of any scriptural religion.

Arthur Harris (Needham Research Institute/University of Cambridge)

Models, Analogy and Figurative Language in Early Chinese Medicine

This paper explores some of the key models and analogies deployed in accounts of disease in elite medicine based on vessel theory in the Western Han period. I show how medical writers relied on figurative language and analogy to form a technical vocabulary suited to describing processes occurring in a person's inside and revealed in manifestations on its outside. They adapted the language of demonic possession, such as "lodging" (*ke* 客) and "hosting" (*zhu* 主), while excluding the involvement of vengeful agents. At the same time, a new set of models and metaphors was developed to express ideas of impersonal regularity and predictability.

Markus Samuel Haselbeck (KU Leuven)

Jiang Qing's Praise of Revenge: Gongyang Confucianism between Tradition and Modern Invention

The Gongyang tradition has long been known for holding the most radical and positive stance toward blood revenge within Confucianism. In reference to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, these scholars analyze historic events that morally justify murder and at times even the annihilation of entire states to right some past wrong. Although these precedents have been discussed and exegetically studied for millennia, it was only at the end of the last century that Jiang Qing 蔣慶 unified them into a fully coherent theory. In his 1995 book, *Introduction to the Study of Gongyang* (*Gongyangxue yinlun* 公羊學引論), he raises his theory of "Praising Revenge" (*da fuchou* 大復仇) to the ranks of a fundamental doctrine of Gongyang Confucianism while weaving it into the historic tradition. This presentation traces revenge from its roots in the *Gongyang Commentary* (*Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳) through Han and Qing exegesis to Jiang's modern (re)invention thereof. This comparison of his and earlier interpretations highlights the tension between his reliance on tradition and the novelty of his own doctrine. Lastly, a look at ongoing discourses on Gongyang Confucianism in Mainland China demonstrates the lasting impact Jiang's ideas had.

Alexander Herzog (University of Munich)

*A Systematic Comparison of the Statutes on Agriculture (*tianlü* 田律) from the Qin and Early Han Periods*

The *Statutes on Agriculture* have the oldest documented history of any statute collection in early imperial Chinese law. In addition, they were of special and great interest for the early empire as they laid the economic basis of the state by defining the standard size of agricultural fields and setting the amount of taxes based on those holdings. Although research on bamboo texts has vitally developed during the past years, there are hardly any studies which systematically compare the *tianlü* fragments found so far. Therefore, this presentation provides such a systematic comparison of *tianlü* findings from Shuihudi No. 11 (睡虎地11號), Qingchuan No. 50 (青川秦墓50號), Zhangjiashan No. 247 (張家山247號) and the Yuelu-Academy-Texts (嶽麓書院律令). The different statutes and articles of these collections will be examined from a legal and linguistic perspective in terms of their language and structure. This comparison shows, that there are some major congruencies between them, as well as numerous congruencies regarding the content of certain statutes and articles. For this reason, it becomes apparent that during the early Han period the *tianlü* were almost exactly copied from the Qin predecessor, with only minor modifications with regards to penalties and fines. Moreover, the Han *tianlü* are much more comprehensive and detailed. Therefore, such comparison greatly enhances and transforms our knowledge of Qin- and Han-statutes.

Karel Jõelet (Tallinn University)

Wittgenstein's Early Thought in China: Preliminary Reflections on Zhang Shenfu's Translation of the Tractatus

Analytical philosophy was introduced to Chinese philosophical circles in 1920 with Bertrand Russell's visit to China. Russell held multiple lectures in Beijing which Zhang Shenfu, an important intellectual of the 20th century, had the privilege to attend. Zhang Shenfu quickly became a fervent admirer of Bertrand Russell's philosophy and the method of mathematical logic. Ludwig Wittgenstein, who is a well-known analytical philosopher and who has contributed immensely to the field of philosophy of language, was known to the Chinese as a student of Russell. Furthermore, it was Russell who mentioned the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (*Tractatus*) and Wittgenstein's philosophy to the Chinese audiences. Years later after Russell's visit to China Zhang Shenfu took it upon himself to produce the first translation of the *Tractatus* into Chinese. Zhang in his own philosophy was rather a materialist and tried to combine analytic philosophy with dialectical materialism. That was essentially his goal in the philosophical undertakings. In my presentation I am analyzing some of the key concepts in the *Tractatus* and comparing them with the Chinese version used by Zhang Shenfu. Analyzing those key concepts can give us a better insight on how analytical philosophy was understood and used in China as a research method during the first half of the 20th century. The interest towards Wittgenstein's early philosophy in China has been growing since the 1980s and more translations of the *Tractatus* have been produced. However, shedding more light on the first translation can give us a much needed understanding of the early days of Wittgenstein's philosophy in China.

Byoung Yoong KANG (University of Ljubljana)

Modernizing Confucianism in the Korean Context

Since the 4th century, the principles of Confucianism have been embraced by Korean dynasties. The study of classic Confucian texts held a significant place in education and was a crucial component of state administration entrance examinations. The adoption of Confucianism not only demonstrated ancient Korea's openness to incorporating aspects of Chinese culture but also left an indelible mark on traditional Korean society. However, this adoption was associated with specific adaptations of the original teachings. These adaptations underwent a process of initial decontextualization and subsequent recontextualization to align with the demands and cultural context of Korean society. This presentation delves into the distinctive characteristics of Korean Confucianism, exploring the prerequisites necessary for its contemporary relevance and examining the traditions it has transmitted to modern-day Korea. The author poses the following pivotal questions: What sets apart the distinctive features of Korean Confucianism when compared to the original Chinese teachings? What conditions must contemporary Korean Confucianism satisfy to align with today's Korean society? What enduring traditions has Korean Confucianism imparted to contemporary development? In conclusion, the author will scrutinize key elements put forth by Korean Modern New Confucians in their pursuit of effective strategies to revitalize Korean Confucianism. This examination will primarily center on the modernization of Korean studies of Confucian rituality (*li* 禮), the contemporary adaptation of ancestral rites, and the development of alternative theories for self-cultivation in the contemporary context.

Maja Maria Kosec (University of Ljubljana)

The Origins of Chinese Culture: Concerned Consciousness or the Culture of Joy?

The concept of concerned consciousness (*youhuan yishi*), which arose from the subject's awakening to his or her own responsibility, forms the root of traditional Chinese culture and philosophy, says Xu Fuguan. In contrast to this is Li Zehou's concept of the culture of joy (*legan wenhua*), a term Li introduces to distinguish the Chinese cultural tradition from the Asian culture of shame (*chigan wenhua*) or the Western culture of guilt (*zuigan wenhua*). The reason for this difference between the Chinese and Western traditions is that the West developed on the basis of religion, while Chinese culture emerged from shamanism, Li argues. The paper explores the broader framework of historical and socio-political events that led to the emergence of the above concepts, as expounded by Xu and Li. Based on Pang Pu's comparative analysis of the concepts of sorrow and joy in the classical texts, I will argue that both Xu Fuguan and Li Zehou intentionally omitted many aspects of joy and sorrow in the Confucian canon in order to better emphasize their own concepts, which only focus on one pole and overlook the importance and close connection with the other. What I will be most interested in are the reasons for this dichotomy and the interrelation between the concepts of sorrow and joy in the concept of complete integration of joy and sorrow (*youle yuanrong*) proposed by Pang Pu.

Märt Läänemets (Estonian Academy of Security Sciences)

Thinking through Mencius. On the Possibility of Building Humane Governance: Ancient Chinese and Modern Prospect

This paper bases on understanding that Mencius was, above all, a political thinker who shared the holistic approach of the early Ruists. Such an approach is best stated in the *Great Learning* with the arguments and proof that the good government of a country and illuminating virtue Under Heaven starts of making sincere one's thoughts and rectifying one's heart. Mencius' criticism of his time political and intellectual situation was sharp and naked (e.g., III, B: 9) and solutions he proposed (particularly in I, A) for bettering it were clear and uncompromising. A good rule only and exclusively should come from the ruler's firm and unfluctuating ethical principles of benevolence (*ren*) and righteousness (*yi*) and be performed in taking care of and educating people. He condemned pursuing profit (*li*) as motivator of action which is especially dangerous in the case of ruler because inevitably leading to harm and violence. Benevolent rule or humane governance (*renzheng*), however, leads to the harmony between the ruler and people (as said, e.g., in I, B, 4). In the paper, Mencian arguments for humane governance in the context of his time political and ideological debate will be discussed as well as causes of his failure in realpolitik. Issues of timeless importance and relevance of Mencius' ideas and whether any parallels could be thrown with modern political theories and practices of policy making will also be speculated.

Dominic Lehmann (University of Munich)

Reading Zhu Xi While Tracing Back the History of li 理

Until today, *li* (理) remains one of the most intriguing and complex terms in the history of Chinese philosophy. Simultaneously, it is essential for the teachings of Neo-Confucianism. These teachings were significantly influenced by the contributions of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) who integrated the ideas of the Five Masters of the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127) into his own system and established the school of thought known as *lixue* 理學. In his scholarship, Zhu Xi, amongst others, endeavored to reconcile *li* with the idea of *taiji* (太極). By invoking Zhou Dunyi's 周敦頤 (1017–1073) opening line ‘*wuji er taiji*’ (無極而太極) of the *Explanation to the Taiji-diagram* (*Taiji tu shuo* 太極圖說), Zhu Xi entrenched his thinking in the ancient tradition of the *Book of Changes*. With this allusion to historical authority, he was able to assert the primacy of *taiji* over *wuji* while consequently emphasizing the importance of *li* which for Confucianism had until then played little to no role. Considering this re-interpretation, my contribution examines the *taiji*-diagram and its geometry to suggest a possible relation to *li*. Based on this connection, I trace the history of both *li* and the *taiji*-diagram arguing for a possible relation to the *Book of Changes* and its hexagrams, thus presenting a hitherto unnoticed layer of *li*.

Nguyen Khuong Hong NGOC (Ghent University)

Practical Learning (實學) and Its Influence on Educational Transformation in Eighteenth-Century Vietnam

The Neo-Confucian School of Practical Learning (實學 *shixue*) emerged as a significant intellectual movement during the Ming-Qing dynasties in China, representing a departure from Confucian orthodoxy. This movement sought to bridge the gap between knowledge and action, contributing to a more dynamic and engaging Confucian education that prioritized practical applicability and moral cultivation. The School extended beyond the borders of China and profoundly influenced Japan, Korean, and Vietnam. There have been numerous researches on Practical Learning in Japan and Korea. Meanwhile, the influence of this School in Vietnam has been little studied. For centuries, the education in Vietnam was dominated by the traditional Confucian content, and exams served as the instrument to select officials for the bureaucracy. This method led to a system that prioritized theoretical knowledge over practical skills. It also limited social mobility, as success in Confucian exams concentrated power among an elite group, excluding individuals with diverse skills that were not adequately captured by the traditional exam format. The eighteenth century in Vietnam witnessed a notable intellectual transformation marked by the assimilation and adaptation of the School of Practical Learning. The influence of this School permeated educational institutions, shaping methodology and curricular content. This contribution therefore aims to elucidate the mechanism and resources through which Practical Learning was introduced to Vietnam, and elaborate how Vietnamese Confucianism, on the basis of Practical Learning, criticized and transformed the state of education in the eighteenth century.

Marko Ogrizek (University of Ljubljana)

De- and Recontextualization of Chinese Confucianism in Japan

Confucianism cannot be simply categorized as a philosophical tradition; however, it undeniably embodies crucial elements of an ethical philosophy. These ethical principles have consistently transcended both the historical and cultural boundaries of the originally Chinese Confucian tradition. This presentation aims to provide a critical analysis of these processes in Japan through the perspective of contemporary Taiwanese scholar Huang Chun-chieh. Huang argues that it is more appropriate to speak of “Confucianisms” in the plural form, emphasizing that core Confucian values and concepts have the capacity to adapt when moving from one context to another while preserving certain characteristics and evolving others. To truly understand and study Confucianisms, an interdisciplinary approach is essential, aligning with the evolving paradigm of East Asian Confucianisms. In this context, philosophy plays a significant role. Taking into account its modifications in Eastern Asia and beyond, which still play a significant role in contemporary societies of the Sinic region, a broader and more diverse range of expressions of Confucian thought emerges. Illustrated by the work of Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai, this presentation will thus demonstrate the processes of de- and recontextualization of Confucian teachings in Japan during the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Margus Ott (Tallinn University)

Contextualizing and Decontextualizing Tendencies in the Chinese Tradition

This paper begins with the premise that Confucianism qualifies as a “portable tradition” owing to its inherent contextual and situational nature. It explores the foundational principles and implications associated with this contextualization. Confucian philosophical tradition places significant emphasis on contextualization, emphasizing the need for one’s behavior to align effectively with the prevailing situation and time. However, achieving this requires a process of training and cultivation. For example, individuals engage in the pursuit of the six arts and the acquisition of knowledge from classical texts. Notably, these pursuits initially induce a state of decontextualization, characterized by initial clumsiness in performance and difficulties in memorizing texts. However, they subsequently pave the way for a more contextual approach through a process of renewed recontextualization. In contrast, Mohists and Legalists highlight the importance of universality and decontextualization, aiming to liberate individuals from parochial, nepotistic, and egoistic inclinations. Nevertheless, it remains impossible to entirely detach oneself from certain factors, such as the contingencies of birth and development and one’s unique perspective. The attainment of freedom and spiritual growth can occur through both contextualization and decontextualization. In fact, these two tendencies are interdependent, engaging in a productive dialectical relationship where they mutually stimulate one another. This fusion of attention to context, de- and recontextualization has not only enriched Confucianism but has also facilitated its smooth transition to other regions.

Riccardo Peruzzi (East China Normal University)

Ethical Implications of fan 反 in the Daodejing

While most scholars agree that the *Daodejing* suggests taking the patterns of change as guidance for human behavior, this aspect of Laozian thought is not free from contradictions. On the one hand, in fact, the text describes the patterns of change in terms of a cyclical alternation of mutually generated opposites, in which none of the two poles (soft/hard, life/death, etc.) has intrinsic priority over the other. In this sense, it promotes an equal appreciation of all the different and complementary segments of change. On the other hand, however, it constantly praises weakness and pliability over strength and hardness, making the avoidance of an early death one of its main concerns. If life and death, softness and hardness are all equal parts of change, why should we preserve one more than the other? How can any specific guidance for behavior (one that suggests to “take this and get rid of that” 去彼取此) stem from an equal acceptance of all phases of change? The present paper aims to explore this tension, by means of a short analysis of the idea of “opposite/return” (*fan* 反) as the “movement of *dao*” (*Daodejing* 40) and of the concepts of *rouruo* 柔弱 and *gangqiang* 剛強. I will conclude by proposing an interpretation that shows how a guidance for human behavior can indeed be derived by Laozi’s impartial patterns of change, opening the possibility for what could be called a Laozian “ethic of re-moving.”

Linda Anna Pietrasanta (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice)

Building Bridges: Luciano Magrini and Xiong Shili’s Intellectual Exchange

Navigating the wide-ranging and complex framework of the *vexata quaestio* of Chinese modernity, this work aims at investigating the almost completely unexplored relationship between Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968) – Chinese philosopher and founder of the New Confucian movement – and the Italian Luciano Magrini (1885-1957) – journalist and political activist with socialist and antifascist tendencies. As a matter of fact, Magrini in the 1920s travelled across Asia as foreign correspondent of two popular Italian newspapers (namely, *Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa*), while in 1954 he founded in Milan the Italian-Chinese Cultural Institute devoted to the dissemination of knowledge about China in Italy. This study will take into consideration Magrini’s works on China, including books (*China Today* and *Buddhism in China*) and the *Notebooks on China*, published by his Cultural Institute, as well as, most importantly, a long and detailed letter that Xiong Shili wrote to Magrini himself. The letter is not only crucial in so far as it attests a direct connection between the two figures, but also because it includes an explicit and thoroughly argued reflection by Xiong on the problematic category of “philosophy” and its possible methodologies. The aim of the study is thus twofold: (1) to shed light on the Xiong-Magrini intellectual relationship and on the influence of Chinese thought outside of its geographical boundaries from the early 20s to the late 50s; (2) taking the letter as a starting point, to reopen the question on the relationship between disciplines (especially philosophy and religion) and Chinese studies.

Flaminia Pischedda (University of Vienna)

*Literary Forms of Arguments in Early Chinese Divination Texts: The Case of the *Shifa 筮法*

Recently, scholars have persuasively explored the “blurring” of content and literary form in Ancient Chinese literature and philosophy, with a focus on philosophical, historical, and poetic genres (Gentz & Meyer 2015). However, technical texts, in particular divination-related texts, remain a significantly underexplored category within this context, with the notable exception of the study of rhyme (Krijgsman 2021). This paper shall address this oversight by looking into the late Warring States *Shifa 筮法 (*Guide of stalk divination*) manuscript from the Tsinghua collection. Specifically, I examine how the repetitive use of semantic, lexico-syntactic and sound elements contribute to the creation of narrative progressions, chiasmic arrangements and pivot lines. My analysis ultimately aims to show how these elements are creatively and consciously crafted to produce complex, self-contained written works, underscoring the scribes’ agency. Put it differently, my study strengthens the notion that technical texts, akin to philosophical and poetic compositions, exhibit a remarkable level of literary sophistication, sustained by a shared, arguably well-established repertoire of text structuring devices.

Marco Pouget (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Establishing a Paradigm of Interpretation. Zheng Xuan’s Rise to the Apex of Eastern Han Scholarship

By adopting and interpreting the “Confucian” classics, scholars and commentators also necessarily modified the ideas formulated therein in their own interests and to their own requirements. My contribution focuses in on one exemplary Eastern Han scholar, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (AD 127–200), who became famous as a prolific teacher, commentator, and author. While there existed a multitude of comparable intellectuals of the same texts, the influence Zheng Xuan was afforded by contemporary and later scholars catapulted him to the pinnacle of Eastern Han classics interpretation until this day. My presentation will trace the establishment of Zheng’s readings as a norm of interpretation and outline his impact on later scholarship of the classics. Zheng Xuan’s readings became a norm even the likes of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) could not completely ignore. In many ways, I argue, this has more to do with dynamics prevalent in society at the time rather than Zheng’s uniqueness. By reading his commentary, any interpretation of the text will inevitably be impacted, whether the respective reading is adopted or rejected.

Michele Pulini and Attilio Andreini (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice)

Beyond the Old/New Philology Querelle: Reading Chinese Manuscripts as the Epitome of Transdisciplinarity

In recent decades, foundational principles within the fields of philology and textual criticism have undergone thorough scrutiny, leading certain scholars to advocate for a paradigm shift encapsulated in the concept of the ‘New Philology’ (Nichols 1988). Sharing commonalities with deconstruction, reader-response theory, and reception theory, the New Philology has since gained growing acceptance. This ‘new’ philological approach diverges from the narrow emphasis on reconstructing archetypes and producing critical editions, shifting instead towards an exploration of individual witnesses of a text within the context of their materialities and reception. Both traditional approaches and ‘new approaches’ exclusively concentrated on questions of contexts and reception prove highly partial when applied to the study of Chinese Warring States excavated texts, especially in dealing with looted manuscripts. In our talk, we advocate for a third approach, somewhat synthesized by Pollock’s (2009) definition of philology as “the discipline of making sense of texts.” The critical examination of early Chinese excavated texts necessitates the convergence of evidence from various fields, including paleography, hermeneutics, phonology, etymology, and more. Drawing examples from the extensive corpus of Chu excavated manuscripts, our aim is to showcase the challenges encountered and the strategies we employ in making sense of these sources. Additionally, we will delve into the inherent difficulties of this task, emphasizing how various sources of evidence can either converge or indicate different directions.

Avital Rom (University of Cambridge)

Figuring Impairment in Early China

Recent years have seen a surge in academic works referring to the connections drawn in early Chinese thought between physical and moral integrity, with an increasing number of studies examining the reversal of the above, namely the relationship between moral faults and bodily imperfections. Much has been written in particular on the ways in which unusual bodily formations as well as penal amputations serve to represent – or, conversely, defy – claims for moral disintegrity. However, little research has been done into a similar aspect of the relationship between the human physique and intellectual integrity. While several noteworthy studies have pointed to the links between the body’s sensory functions and notions of wisdom and knowledge, the reversed notion – the conceptual linkage between sensory impairment and ignorance – has been subject to a surprising degree of scholarly neglect. Aiming to redress this gap, this paper sets out to investigate early Chinese figurative usages of blindness (*mang* 盲), deafness (*long* 聾), and madness (*kuang* 狂) – impairments considered to affect the eyes, ears, and heart-mind respectively. Grouped together, these terms may be categorised as representing an early Chinese notion of ‘perceptual impairment,’ which often serves to metaphorize the ignorance of members of the elite who are unknowledgeable or unstudious (*bu xue* 不學). This taxonomy of perceptual impairments as embedded within the ignorance metaphor, I argue, may in turn enhance our understanding of notions of completeness and mind-body thinking in early China.

Jana S. Rošker (University of Ljubljana)

Sublating Original Confucianism: Towards a New Meta-Confucian Paradigm

To clarify the seemingly paradoxical nature of progressive and conservative elements within Confucianism, this presentation aims to illuminate transformations within the inner structure of Confucian ideational traditions. It will begin by introducing the three reforms and four phases that have significantly influenced the development of Confucianism throughout Chinese intellectual history, laying the foundations for its potential adoption by other cultures and regions. Building on this foundation, the author will elucidate why Confucianism has not been transmitted beyond China as a monolithic, uniform, and static ideological construct. To expound upon the fundamental structure of the relationship between Confucian philosophical ethics and the Confucian state doctrine, this contribution seeks to provide a deeper insight into the Confucian concept of a “combination of hierarchy and mobility” using the innovative methodology of transcultural comparative sublation. Through this approach, the author aims to shed light on essential inquiries related to the so-called “meta-Confucian paradigm.”

Téa Sernelj (University of Ljubljana)

The Janus-Headed Structure of the Confucian Subjectivity and Its Connection to East Asian Ideologies of Meritocracy

This paper delves into the intricate nature of Confucian subjectivity, drawing from the binary concept of *neisheng waiwang* 内圣外王 (Inner Sage and Outer King). Throughout the course of Chinese intellectual history, this concept has been instrumental in distinguishing between the empirical and transcendental aspects of the human subject. Initially introduced by Zhuangzi, it later resonated strongly with Confucian scholars. Its significance transcended the classical era, extending its influence into Neo-Confucianism through which its unique fusion of inner morality and external pragmatics was introduced to societies in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, where it became assimilated into broader ethical and symbolic frameworks of these regions. Subsequently, in the theories of Modern New Confucians, this concept experienced a resurgence, assuming a pivotal role in theoretical discourses on subjectivity and political philosophy. Drawing on a rich tapestry of their works, I will illuminate the binary nature of Confucian subjectivity, which embodies both inner moral cultivation and outer political awareness. By dissecting this Janus-headed structure, my presentation reveals the role of *neisheng waiwang* 内圣外王 in shaping pre-modern and modern governance in East Asia. Modern Confucian interpretations demonstrate how this fusion of personal virtue and benevolent rule has impacted East Asian meritocracies. This presentation offers a comprehensive examination of how and why certain principles from original Confucian teachings could be creatively transformed and modified without losing their embeddedness into the paradigmatic Confucian framework.

Geir Sigurðsson (University of Iceland)

Adaptive and Transformational Dispositions in Confucian Ethics: Some Pros and Cons

It has often been pointed out that Confucian philosophy, especially in its early moral approaches, tends to be rather “open-ended” in the sense that it is “situational” and refrains from insisting upon rigid principles that should be upheld in every instance. The “Boston Confucians,” for instance, interpreted Confucianism therefore as a “portable tradition” that could in principle be applied in any society. This feature appears to contradict the fact that Confucianism as a historical and political ideology was often very rigid, conservative, and even reactionary. In this paper I will argue that these two seemingly paradoxical features of Confucianism are not that contradictory at all and that while Confucianism’s adaptive character certainly enabled it to take hold in societies outside of China, it also contributed to its adoption of morally questionable parochial values and practices.

Christian Soffel (Trier University)

Where Confucius Failed: Social Background Impacting the Interpretation of Canonical Confucian Texts

In this case study, I am focusing on Chapter 13 from the *Zhongyong*, where Confucius laments being unable to properly function in four social contexts that are central for Confucianism: in the relationship to father, ruler, brothers and friends. Although this passage is not considered to be the philosophical core of the *Zhongyong*, it is still cherished by its commentators. Chinese and Western scholars nearly unanimously interpret it as Confucius encouraging his students to engage in modesty and proper behaviour, as well as delivering a model example expressing the “Golden Rule.” A different interpretation, however, can be attained when we take the family background of Confucius into account. The corresponding sources – like the *Kongzi jiayu* – are overshadowed by serious doubts on their reliability. However, if we take the little information we have and seriously consider the (apocryphal) family history of Confucius, this chapter of the *Zhongyong* delivers a quite different message. Confucius does no longer appear to be a role model teacher of modesty, but rather turns into an embittered old man, putting psychological pressure on his students. In view of the complex textual history of the corresponding sources, it is very difficult to determine which interpretation is closer to the “original Confucius.” Still, I will be able to demonstrate the wide scope of interpretations and the huge hermeneutical shift that may happen when a canonical text is read from the perspective of a specific social setting.

Roel Sterckx (University of Cambridge)

The Farmer as figura in Early China

This paper explores figurative references to farming and the peasant in texts from the Warring States, Qin, and Han periods. In early China the agricultural order cut two ways; on the one hand agrarianism represented the ideological foundation of the well-ordered state. On the other hand, retreating to the fields could be a deliberate and symbolic stance against the state and its officialdom. Rustication could be a calculated political choice. So, while political authority derived from a ruler’s ability to manage a farming population and feed the state, paradoxically, to be part of the educated elite and officialdom, one had to abandon the fields. To no great surprise an agrarian paradigm runs through the social, political, and philosophical grammar of the time: early China’s conceptual vocabulary was deeply influenced by an agrarian register. In this paper I will illustrate this by focusing on narratives that involve ploughing and weeding. Ploughing often figures as a synecdoche for the conquest of land by man, political expansion, or the act of civilization itself. Weeding and ploughing invoked both the image of creating order as well as the repudiation of an existent social and political order. It therefore offered a particularly potent trope in the casting of legendary sages, officials, and figures of authority in general.

Martin Svensson Ekström (University of Gothenburg)

Metaphors for the Metaphor in Pre-Qin Thought: Reading Zuozhuan, Xunzi and Lüshi Chunqiu Through Aristotle

Does the metaphor translate? More specifically, is the Aristotelian concept of *metaphora* applicable to the (incidental) theorizing about “metaphorical” expressions found in pre-Qin texts? Or did the more overarching assumptions, in ancient Greece and early China, of how the world is constituted determine also how figurative language was conceptualized? Is the *metaphora* thus a typically “metaphysical” concept, and are its Chinese, pre-Qin counterparts conditioned by a “correlative” and “cosmological” way of thinking? I suggest it would be profitable for Sinology—an inherently comparative discipline—to explore the internal contradictions in certain comparable “thought formations,” such as the *metaphora* and the *xing* of the Mao Commentary to the *Odes*. For instance, while Aristotle’s *metaphora* seemingly builds on an unhampered transition from rational cognition (“the observation of the similar [in apparently different things]”) to the expression thereof in language, in the Rhetoric Aristotle emphasizes that a good metaphor should not be immediately understandable: metaphor is thus also a hinderance to understanding. I suggest that this is exactly the contradictory stance towards metaphoricity found in certain passages in the *Zuozhuan*, *Xunzi* and *Lüshi Chunqiu*: a metaphor is an economical, abbreviated way of expressing “the likeness” between “this” and “that” (to use Aristotle’s deceptively simple terminology) but it also, in certain circumstances, consciously delays the decoding of the message, thus temporarily confusing the addressee. Finally, in lieu of a “strong” concept, such as Aristotle’s triumphant *metaphora*, we find in pre-Qin texts a set of makeshift metaphors for the metaphor: “grave,” “ghost,” and “corpse.”

Anders Sydskjær (University of Berne)

Perspective and Storytelling in the Zhuangzi

Zhuangzi 1, 2, and 17 all explore the idea that we all labour under the yoke of ignorance. Ignorance brought about by the limits imposed by the span of our lives, the shape of our bodies, by our education. But there are better and worse ways of being limited; some remain unaware that they are seeing the world from a limited perspective. This causes them to inappropriately impose their own patterns of right and wrong onto others. These are commonplaces. But a recurring problem is that the texts, insofar as they propose alternatives, do so *via negativa*. In this talk, I will explore the thought that the formal features of the narratives presented in these texts exemplify conduct consistent with the texts’ negative claims. More pointedly: in reading and understanding these narratives, we are undergoing a form of basic training in the skills the texts suggest that we need. One way of talking about the ethical ideal espoused in these chapters is in terms of the contrast between two extremes: the limited view and a view from nowhere. The former is untenable, the latter unachievable. So, what do we get in their stead? From a literary standpoint, one of the striking features of the narratives in these chapters is the extensive representation of perspectives, through verbs of seeing, thinking, and evaluation, other than the narrators’ own. The argumentative sections of these chapters present adopting a variety of perspectives as the thing to be done – something difficult but necessary.

Jan Vihan (Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences)

Rooting a Worldview in the Script: A Philosophical Reading of the Shuowen Jiezi

A Qin stele proclaims that the First Emperor standardized written characters (同書文字). Contrary to this claim, paleographic evidence shows that even during the Han the script continued to be far from standardized. Writing in a postscript (dated 100 A.D.) to his comprehensive manual of what would become standard character forms, Xu Shen positioned his uniquely structured composition in a tradition of primers dating back to the Zhou and the Qin. Moreover, he used the newly coined Qin compound *wenzi* in the title of his work. Traditionally the distinction between these two terms has been explained as between simple and compound graphs, making Xu Shen primarily a founder of the independent discipline of grammatology. Recently, Françoise Bottéro convincingly challenged this dominant view arguing that the difference rather consists in graphic forms (*wen*) vs. written words (*zi*). Following through the implications of this hypothesis for the overall methodology of the Elucidating Words by means of Explaining Graphs, I argue, now contrary to Bottéro, that Xu Shen’s purpose was to organise vocabulary and define basic word meanings by recourse to their graphic form. On the basis of several character glosses I test the degree to which graphic form and word meaning are seen as interrelated and show that graphic analysis is often a projection of particular word meaning rather than vice versa. Xu Shen’s innovative study of graphs thus cannot be separated from his lexicographic principles which in turn are tied to questions of moral value, a prerogative of classical Chinese philosophy.

Zhi XU (Nanjing University)

Analects Poetry: Another Form of Interpretation of the Confucian Classics

“Analects Poetry” 論語詩 is a form of poetry that interprets the Confucian Classic *The Analects*. This article delves into Zhang Jiucheng’s 張九成 Seven-character quatrain of *The Analects* 論語絕句 as a point of departure, thoroughly exploring the poems from the Middle and Late Ming dynasties that resonate, replenish, and emulate it. This article scrutinizes the backgrounds and motivations behind the creation of these poems. Simultaneously, the article places a spotlight on four distinct features characterizing these poetic works: the orientation of commentary, the articulation of emotions directed towards classical texts, the aesthetics of purity and silence, and the multi-level interaction among interpreters. In essence, “Analects Poetry” does not merely propagate the Tao 道 embedded in Confucian classics, nor does it confine itself to the political consciousness and ethics associated with these classics. Instead, it prioritizes the genuine personal reading experiences of interpreters, serving as the central thread for interpretative activities. While these poems may not align with the mainstream studies of Confucianism and poetics, they significantly contribute to the expansion of scholarship in these two dimensions, offering readers a refreshing perspective.

Pawel Zygodlo (Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

Was Yin Wen a Ming Jia Thinker? – Comparative Analysis of the School of Names and the Thought of Yin Wen Zi

As Johnston (2019) has pointed out, amongst the four pre-Qin thinkers (Deng Xi, Hui Shi, Gongsun Long, and Yin Wen) of the School of Names (Ming Jia) who are believed to have authored written works, Yin Wen enjoyed the least scholarly interest. As much as it may result from the doubtful authenticity of the text, the strong Daoist/Huang-Lao flavour of even the text available up to date may have equally contributed to the lack of interest in Yin Wen from Ming Jia scholars. The proposed paper is meant to determine whether or to what degree Yin Wen can or should be classified as one of the Ming Jia thinkers. For this purpose, it will first attempt to determine how the term Ming Jia emerged and how it is being utilised by various pre-Qin texts. By doing this, it will try to establish the main features of the School of Names as presented in those texts. In the subsequent step, an attempt will be made to trace those features in the Yin Wen Zi text. However, since the text of Yin Wen Zi seems to be essentially a Wei-Jin forgery (Xu 1996), a review of the thought of Yin Wen as it is being presented by other texts of the Qin-Han period also seems indispensable. By comparing findings, it will be determined whether, or in what sense, Yin Wen can be considered as one of Ming Jia’s thinkers. In other words, was Yin Wen a Ming Jia thinker or just one of Jixia’s scholars?



HISTORY (PREMODERN)

HISTORY (PREMODERN)

Milad Abedi (University of Zurich)

Regions in the East, People from the East – On the Evidence for China and Chinese in Ancient Iranian Literature

This presentation focuses on the references to “China” and “Chinese” in Middle Iranian literature (1000 BCE–900 CE). Between the Persian and Chinese empires, various Iranian and non-Iranian ethnolinguistic groups were established, some of them primarily serving as gateways for settlers from Western and Central areas of Asia towards the region of Chinese influence. These intermediate polities providing West Asia with Chinese products were easily identified with the goods they provided. Even greater – clearly non-Chinese empires – such as that of the Kushans (30–375 CE) and the Hephthalites (440–560 CE) which fostered trade relations and movement from and to China for various peoples, often ended up being described as Chinese in the Persian southwestern cultural centre. Comparatively, the Persian notion of “Rome” or “Roman” was used for a far wider area than the actual Roman empire: In Middle Persian literature Alexander the Great is cursed a Roman and later the Ottoman Turks were addressed likewise, in memory of the former Byzantine Empire. Whom or where do Middle Iranian attestations such as Zoroastrian Middle Persian *čīn-īh*, *čīn-īg* ‘Chinese,’ *čīn-estān* ‘China’ and Sogdian *čīn* ‘China’ and *čīn-dar* ‘China-in; inland China’ refer to? Do they signify the Chinese heartland or rather one of those people living in between: Khotanese, Sogdians, Bactrians, Khwarezmians, Turks or possibly the inhabitants of the Hexi region?

Alexander Campos Aran (University of Munich)

Periphery as Center: The Hexi Corridor in the Wei-Jin Period (220–420) and the Re-making of Empire in Frontier Regions

The post-Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) era is often considered an era of political turmoil, prolonged warfare, and social upheaval. Often described as a “dark age,” scholarship has focused on social and political processes in the Central Plains, neglecting similarly significant developments at the peripheries of the crumbling Han empire. This imbalance results from scholars almost exclusively relying on historical records that by their very nature have little interest in purported socio-political border regions. Yet, a plethora of tombs from the Hexi corridor in modern-day Gansu province dating between the Wei and Jin periods (220–420) have yielded rich archaeological data that almost cry for systematic analyses. Their complex architecture and elaborate tomb assemblages betray a flourishing local culture that was built on a well-developed economic and political system. By combining comprehensive analyses of material culture and with close readings of historical sources, I will explain that the Hexi corridor as a borderland between diverse political, cultural, and ecological spaces was anything but peripheral. Its unique geographical location at the frontier of the former Han empire along with decline of central imperial authority set the stage for the region to become a socio-political center. Contrary to scholarly consensus, the Hexi corridor was not merely a thoroughfare. Rather, it witnessed multifaceted exchanges between humans, objects, and ideas of manifold cultural backgrounds. I will highlight the intricate dynamics of human mobility in this border region and argue, more generally, that we can gain significant insights from reevaluating peripheries as centers.

Annie CHAN (University of Munich)

Effects of the Built Environment During the Rise of the First Turk Empire

The contours of medieval urban transformation astride the Tarim-Tian Shan mid-latitudes are to a large extent viewed through the lens of religious iconography and Chinese political history. Thus, research is often directed at finds evincing the materiality of interregional cultural forms that demarcate routes of transmission conforming to purported topographical perimeters. Most notable examples include murals, religious buildings, and ornamental objects made of precious metals and textiles. This paper redirects the attention to the built environments that engendered some of these finds. It questions the social impact of space use as well as the spatial patterns of cultural change with respect to building form, function, layout, and site selection. The paper finds explanation for the character of cultural heterogeneity across the region's desert and montane steppes at the onset of the First Turk empire (late 6th–early 7th centuries) in syntaxes of built landscape that are the legacy of coterminous protectorates, kingdoms, and confederate groups of preceding centuries.

Huilin CHANG (Hong Kong Chu Hai College)

Reconstructing Sages: An Attempt to Discuss the Transmission of the Story of Tai Bo Fleeing to Wu 太伯奔吳 in the Han 漢 Dynasty (202 BCE-9 CE, 25-220 CE)

The origins of the story of Tai Bo fleeing to Wu at the beginning of the Zhou Dynasty are unknown. Existing evidence requires us to eliminate the interference of Yi Hou Ze Gui 宜侯矢簋 (Jicheng #4320) and return to the original text. As the story was transmitted during the Warring States period, contemporary sources confirmed Wu as a Ji-clan 姬 state, with Tai Bo existing in both the Yu and Wu states. Moving into the early Han 漢 Dynasty (202 BCE-9 CE, 25-220 CE), especially in the *Shiji* 史記, the core elements of the two stories were pieced together to form a new narrative, the version that is popular today. When answering whether this adaptation was a self-imagination of the ethnic group seeking recognition for their identity, we can at least conclude that due to the knowledge gap and significant textual changes during the Qin and Han periods, there objectively exists misinterpretation. From the perspectives of climate, economy, population, and culture, it is discovered that the Wu region in Western Han was just an ordinary area within the empire, lacking the capability and reason to seek such recognition. The historical memory of climate change, population migration, and cultural accumulation during the transition between Western and Eastern Han and the end of the Han constructed a civilized ethnic identity, giving new meaning to the story of “Tai Bo Fleeing to Wu.”

Silvia Freiin Ebner von Eschenbach (University of Munich)

Consumption and Supply of Timber and Fire Wood of Hangzhou (Lin'an) and its Seaport Mingzhou (Qingyuan, Ningbo) during the Southern Song Dynasty

When the Southern Song capital Lin'an 臨安 (Hangzhou 杭州) grew into a metropolis of an estimated 1.5–2 million residents, timber and fuel were dearly needed in great quantities. Timber of different qualities including noble and rot-resistant woods, was in demand for the construction of houses, temples, and palaces, of water facilities such as locks, weirs, and pipelines, and for the fabrication of household utensils and coffins. Fuel was required in industries such as kilns, breweries, and salt pans, and for the incineration of the dead. After the hills in the vicinity had been deforested very soon, they were not replanted as it was obviously cheaper to import certain qualities of wood via the Zhe River (Zhejiang 浙江) from its upper reaches in Huizhou 徽州. Other qualities of wood were imported from overseas via Qingyuan 慶元 (Mingzhou 明州, Ningbo 寧波) which after the silting-up of the Hangzhou Bay due to influx of sediments from the Yellow Sea and the Zhe River, became Lin'an's major seaport via the reconstructed Zhedong Transport Canal (Zhedong yunhe 浙東運河). In Qingyuan, in turn, ship-building consumed huge amounts of timber that were supplied from its hinterlands. Based on local gazetteers, documentary collections, and individual reports and diaries, the paper will also look into the question of erosion and ensuing sedimentation as well as reforestation in view of long-term returns, taxation, and pricing with regard to environmental and economic issues.

Franco Gatti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Magicians and Swindlers at the Court of Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 684; 705-710: *Ye Jingneng* 葉靜(靖)能 (?-710 and *Zheng Pusi* 鄭普思 (?-?)

From the end of the Zhou Dynasty 周 (690-705) to the relatively politically stable period under the leadership of Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712-756), the intermediate reigns of Zhongzong and Ruizong 睿宗 (r. 684-690; 710-712) were troubled by factions and power groups still associated with the family of the deceased Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705; r. 690-705) and the new empress consort Wei 韋皇后 (?-710), who tried to emulate her deeds. It is a rich time for Chinese historiography, which records the facts from a primarily ethical perspective. Among the many figures who populate the struggles of this period, two individuals, Zheng Pusi and Ye Jingneng, are mentioned in both the historical record and the memorials addressed to the throne as negative examples because of their nefarious influence on the emperor. However, unlike other members of the power struggling factions, it is the magical-religious arts of the two characters that are harshly stigmatized. This paper will attempt to analyze how the authors of the historical sources (*Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文, *Tang huiyao* 唐會要, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑) disapprove of these negative examples from the point of view of the extraordinary powers they boasted. Part of the analysis also involves terminology, as the rigor of the writing style of the sources examined requires terms that make an immediate, clear, and unambiguous appeal to deceptive or non-canonical practices (*shushi* 術士, *yiaowang* 妖妄, *xiaoji* 小技).

Andrei Gomouline (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Between Ideology and Practice: Foundation of the Han Imperial Academy Taixue

In the fifth year of Yuanshuo (124 BCE), the emperor Han Wu-di graciously approved the proposal, put forth by his chancellor Gongsun Hong, and ordered to establish a new educational structure for fifty students, who were to immerse themselves in classical studies for a year and subsequently undergo examinations. Unnamed in the proposal, this structure got the title of Taixue, translated as “Imperial Academy” in Western sources. Most studies depict its foundation as an important step in establishing ideological orthodoxy and an attempt to impose imperial monopoly on the preserving and transmitting the classical tradition, and regard it as a place where the staff for the administrative work, including central government, would be trained. Despite this, historical sources provide scant evidence of Taixue significantly influencing Western Han intellectual or political landscape, and only few graduates secured prominent government positions, raising questions about the success of its foundation. Nevertheless, a careful analysis of Gongsun Hong’s proposal suggests that preserving the classical tradition or filling central offices with Taixue students were not his primary objectives, if at all. The proposed paper examines the foundation of Taixue in a broader historical context, arguing that it was part of court activities aimed at consolidating central power by enhancing control over people rather than ideas – in particular, it sought to undermine the practice of gathering retainers by local lords, wealthy officials, or powerful clans.

Jinglin GUAN (Hong Kong Baptist University)

Interpretations on Selected Characters in the Tsinghua Bamboo-Strip “San buwei” 參不韋 Manuscript and Preliminary Analysis of “Wuxingze” 五刑則

“Wuxingze” 五刑則 is the core thought of “San buwei” 參不韋 in the twelfth volume of the Tsinghua (Qinghua 清華) University Warring States bamboo strips. There are texts directly related to “Wuxingze.” Strips 1-6 start the manuscript with pointing out that “Wuxingze” is the essential principle of governance. Strips 7-18 elaborate the specific contents of *wuze* 五則 (five rules), *wuxing* 五行 (five elements), *wuyin* 五音 (five sounds), *wuse* 五色 (five colors) and *wuwe* 五味 (five tastes). Strips 27-30 discuss the concepts of *xing* 刑 (penalty) and *fa* 罰 (punishment). “Wuxingze” can be categorized into two dimensions, namely “laws of nature (*ziran faze* 自然法則)” and “legal system (*fali zhidu* 法律制度)” (Jia Lianxiang, 2022). However, the manuscript does not specify the meaning of “Wuxingze,” which has led to discussions among scholars, some of whom may have changed the interpretation of *xing* 刑 (penalty) to 型 (model) or 形 (shape). This study interprets the texts related to “Wuxingze” in the manuscript and to compare them with relevant early Chinese documents, such as “Wu ji” 五紀 in the Tsinghua bamboo strips and *Shangshu* 尚書, in an attempt to analyze the meaning of “Wuxingze.”

Xiaomeng HE (University of Hamburg)

Paratexts as Tools for Tracing Legal Manuscripts: Case Studies of Statute and Ordinance Collections from Qin and Han Times

Legal manuscripts from pre- and early imperial China often feature diverse paratexts, essential elements designed not only to structure texts but also to categorize physical documents. This paper offers a comprehensive examination of paratextual components in daily used bamboo and wooden manuscripts, encompassing administrative formulas, titles, and filing notes. The focus extends to several multiple-text manuscripts containing ordinances (*ling* 令) from Qin times preserved at the Yuelu Academy. Besides, it delves into statute (*lü* 律) collections by conducting a diachronic comparison of the categories and textual features among several versions from different periods in the Han Dynasty. This includes newly excavated materials from ancient tombs and discarded wells in southern areas, such as Tuzishan well 7 (195–188 BC), Zhangjiashan tombs 247 and 336 (186 BCE, 173–167 BCE), Hujia caochang tomb 12 (ca. 163–157 BCE), as well as Shuihudi tomb 77 (ca. 157–141 BCE). Serving as both organizational tools and orientation aids for efficient retrieval, paratexts play a significant role in understanding the production and editing of legal knowledge as well as the involved agents. Through this investigation, the study illuminates the intricate process of organizing written law and reveals discrepancies among individual collections at local offices, where copies were created and interpreted with discretion for the purpose of accommodating everyday practices.

Michael Höckelmann (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Culture Wars: Contested Concepts in Chen Yinke's (1890–1969) Histories of Medieval China

During the 1930s and 1940s, historian Chen Yinke (1890–1969) wrote that when the ruling classes or aristocracy of medieval China (220–960 CE) referred to their clans and those of others as either Hu or Han, they based their judgment on culture rather than race.—The above sentence contains, in nuce, several of the most problematic terms in the study of Chinese history, both modern and premodern. What lies behind ostensibly modern concepts such as “culture,” “race,” “class,” and many more, which Chen uses without ever defining them? What did he mean when he called his field of study the “ethnocultural history since medieval times”? How strong was the influence of Marxism when Chen, whom historians of modern China like to call “bourgeois” and “conservative,” portrayed the political conflicts between factions during the Tang (618–907) as class struggles? Chen, who was vilified during the Cultural Revolution and redeemed in the 1990s after the cultural fever of the Reform Era, remains an enigma because he continued to write in Literary Chinese even while spending the last twenty years of his life under Communist rule. This paper revisits Chen’s works on medieval history, particularly his *Draft Exposition of the Political History of the Tang*, and examines Chen’s peculiar usage of the above terms. It will show how he based his understanding of those terms, which continues to influence the field today, on his readings of medieval sources and the continuous debates about the definitions and differences of modern concepts.

Yohei KAKINUMA (Waseda University)

Gou (Rewards) in the Han Dynasty

During the Han Dynasty, the term *gou* 購 was used to indicate the rewards that the government used to incentivize people to contribute to the maintenance of public order. A typical example is the rewards paid to those who caught or killed criminals. There were two types of *gou* rewards: one payable in coins and the other one payable in gold. According to my previous research, those who arrested sentenced criminals were paid in coin, while those who detained individuals guilty of minor misdemeanors were paid in gold. This conclusion contradicts the common belief that gold was considered a currency more valuable than coins during the Han Dynasty. However, the recently excavated legal and administrative manuscripts call for a closer look at the functioning of the multi-currency system of the early Chinese empires in the context of rewarding private individuals for their contributions to the upkeep of legal order. This new evidence will be the focus of the present paper.

Maria Khayutina (University of Munich)

Rewards and Penalties in Western Zhou Political Economy

Rewards and gifts constituted the backbone of the Zhou political system. Detailed lists of received objects can be found in inscriptions on bronze vessels and bells commissioned by members of the elite to commemorate favors and to display loyalty. They inform that kings and lesser rulers donated to subordinates land, dependents, clothing, vehicles, cowries, jade, and metal objects. Finished metal products included weapons, horse gear and chariot fixings, and, seldom, ritual vessels. Metal (*jin* 金) was also given in an indefinite form, possibly referring both to ingots and scrap, usable for casting. It is not yet clear how the kings, lesser rulers, and other elites acquired raw metals to run or to participate in this system. Most scholars suppose that Zhou kings collected metal ores as a tribute and redistributed them either directly or in the form of finished products down the political hierarchy. However, evidence of non-tributary economic transactions in epigraphic texts and indications of the existence of regional metal-trading networks in the archaeological record signal that the Zhou economy was more diversified and less centralized than usually assumed. In the present paper, I test the hypothesis that the Zhou legal system could already function as one of the vehicles used to recompensate some costs of the ruling elites' political spending by imposing fines and fees that ought to be paid in metal.

Maxim Korolkov (Heidelberg University)

A Good Life for All? Economic Opportunities, Inequality, and Living Standards in the Han-Era Nanyang Basin, Henan

The Early China scholars are only starting to develop an interest in the long-term trends of economic development, including the dynamics of productivity, living standards, inequality, and institutional and environmental factors that drove these changes. Just as in the case of the other regions of the ancient world, the principal challenge is the shortage of quantitative information on economic performance. For the Han period (202 BCE–220 CE), this problem is exacerbated by the parameters of archaeological research in China, particularly the very limited understanding of settlement conditions as well as the nutrition and health of the ancient populations. In contrast, over the past few decades, Chinese archaeologists excavated a large number of ancient cemeteries. As this presentation will demonstrate, these materials are useful for assessing the levels of inequality, the emergence of new economic opportunities, and geographically uneven changes in living standards. I focus on several cemeteries in the Nanyang Basin in southwestern Henan Province, which have been published as archaeological reports since 2010. Nanyang Basin was one of the most populous and wealthiest parts of the Han Empire, and contemporary written sources emphasize its agricultural, industrial, and commercial vigor. Now, with the new evidence, we can better understand the impact of these developments on the lives of the local people and also test the long-standing hypotheses about the economic trajectories of the Han Empire.

Andrea Kreuzpointner (University of Munich)

Old Wine in New Bottles? Motif and Style of the Hexi Corridor Tombs

The Hexi Corridor in Gansu during the Wei Jin Nanbei chao period (ca. 3rd–6th century CE) is commonly seen as Western Periphery in contrast to the centre, the Central Plains. Along the cities of Wuwei, Jinchang, Zhangye, Jiayuguan and Dunhuang, numerous tombs were found and excavated. In comparison to the grave furnishings of the Han-dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) in the Central Plains, the tombs of the Hexi Corridor show fewer depictions not only of mythological figures or deities like Fuxi, Nüwa, Xiwangmu and Dongwanggong, but also Confucian heroic tales leading to a focus of presentation of daily life like preparing meals, slaughter, field work or southern Chinese animals like the parrot. Innovative elements like the Screen Wall *zhaobi* were also added. This talk aims to show that despite the continued usage of familiar motifs adhering to Han-period traditions, the tombs document the creation of a new, unmistakable style, not only in the way they were embellished, but also in the choice of motifs. The murals and reliefs found in the graves prove that the region was able to create a uniform style despite its subjection to artistic influences from various regions of the Central Plains. This style may even have been deliberately formed to distinguish itself from that of the Central Plains, thus guaranteeing the region a sense of unity and its own identity while setting itself apart from the Central Plains, thus establishing a new centre, overcoming its peripheral existence.

Ishayahu Landa (Bonn University)

Starving in the Chinggisid Age: Examining the Interrelations Between Famines and the Crisis of Mongol Eurasia of the Mid-14th Century

During the 14th century, the Chinggisid rule that had united large parts of Eurasia during the last century collapsed. The decline processes took place with varying speed and with time-delays depending on the regions; by the 1380s, however, the Chinggisid rule had either been replaced by new powers and ideologies or complemented by them to a significant degree. This so-called “Chinggisid Crisis” coincided with the beginnings of the Little Ice Age and was accompanied by a wide range of climatic- and societal-caused hazards, including massive hunger waves, often followed by epidemics. The Chinggisid authorities in the different parts of the continent reacted with a range of measures to the appearance and subsequent impact of these hazards. How important were the famines in the late history of Mongol Eurasia? How did the reactions of the Mongol governments differ? How and to which degree can we even approach the scope of the impact the famines have had on the nomadic and settled populations? Finally, what role did famines have on the stability of the Chinggisid rule across the continent? This paper combines a detailed analysis of primary sources in Chinese, Arabic, Persian, and Old Slavonic in order to tackle the famines in the history of the Chinggisid Crisis along these four major discussion lines.

David J. Lebovitz (Hong Kong Polytechnic University)

Warring States Pentatonic Charts and Correlate Schemes for Ideas and Texts

Correlative cosmology, particularly *wu xing* 五行 (five-element; five agent) schemes of interrelation, are often regarded primarily as a Western Han phenomenon. New manuscripts, however, are providing an ever more robust set of data for understanding the development and early use of such schemes in pre-imperial times. In particular, this paper compares two recently published charts in the Qinghua corpus, the *Wu yin tu 五音圖 (Five tone diagram) and *Yue feng 樂風 (Musical airs) with the Shanghai Museum’s *Caifeng qumu 采風曲目 (Chart of tunes for collected airs), as models of correlative interaction, order, and comprehensiveness. These manuscripts contain previously unknown lists, indexes, and diagrams, some of which may have had a very practical purpose (such as, for example, bringing bells and stringed instruments into tune). Perhaps precisely due to their practical utility, such texts and charts provide models of resonance or completeness that can confer a plausible structure on both abstract ideas and concrete texts. Aside from the more obvious use of pentatonic schemes for ordering songs by key, the paper will discuss examples of how correlate schemes came to order moral, cosmological, and political ideas, well before the Western Han.

Alexis Lycas (EPHE, Paris)

Historicizing the Invention of Landscape

Towards the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century, a cultural phenomenon took shape in and beyond the Yangzi basin: landscape. Its birth and early development are commonly attributed to a small number of painters, poets, thinkers and polymaths such as Gu Kaizhi (345-406), Zong Bing (375-443) and Wang Wei (415-443), who thought about space, nature and man in novel and relational ways. They produced treatises or texts devoted to landscape (*shanshui*), and contributed to the development of the idea into a concept that has since then been well studied, but mostly from an art historical and literary perspective. This presentation will instead focus on how locality writings produced in the same period (but also slightly earlier), have grappled with, and sometimes defined landscape. Produced by officials such as Yuan Shansong († 401) and Sheng Hongzhi (5th century), stationed far from the Southern capital Jiankang, these writings have been somewhat neglected because: 1) they are all fragmentary and have only been transmitted via geographical treatises and encyclopedia; 2) such prose writings usually draw less scholarly attention than poetry or (texts on) paintings, despite certain literary qualities. I would argue that, if pieced together and properly historicized, they actually offer a wealth of information to understand the social and intellectual background that shaped the idea of landscape.

Samira Müller (University of Zurich)

When Felt Met Lacquer – A Philological Study on Initial Elements Pertaining to the Formation of a Hexi Culture

This paper explores the development of regional culture(s) in the Hexi corridor region by considering aspects caused by topological and climatic conditions as well as the amalgamation of Chinese and non-Chinese cultural and social elements. In 121 BCE the Xiongnu surrendered to Han rule and the Hexi region was to be fortified against possible future aggressions through the erection of four commanderies. By the beginning of the first century BCE these areas started to experience a large influx of Chinese soldiers, administrative functionaries, and settlers. The land the people encountered was in many aspects very different from their homeland. Not only the arid climate and unfamiliar environment, but also a different demographic composition and the close contact to pastoral groups native to the region, who pursued a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle, created a completely different basis of life. This called for the formation of new subsistence strategies and readjustments of cultural and social structures among Chinese immigrants and probably also among the locals. Different kinds of everyday material culture, culinary art, fashion, and means of transportation coalesced to a unique regional culture. Through information gained from North-western Chinese administrative manuscripts, three categories of possible initial factors which constituted this enigmatic Hexi culture will be discussed: (1) elements reflecting Chinese influences like chopsticks and the use of hemp fibres, (2) elements which might have come from various other cultures, especially the versatile uses of felt and leather, and (3) the local environmental factors.

Maddalena Poli (Yale University)

*Introducing the Category of “Analects-like Material” 論語類: The *Zhongni said and *Kongzi said Warring States Manuscripts*

The importance of the *Analects* 論語 in Chinese history is hard to underplay. Beyond China, together with the figure of Confucius, the *Analects* became a central text in East Asian cultures; it was also one of the first texts encountered by European thinkers. Because the *Analects* is known as the depository of Confucius’s own words, its textual history has been object of intense scrutiny, ever since its formation during the Han empires. In the last five years, scholars have recovered in two separate corpora two manuscripts that bear on the textual formation of the *Analects*. This paper argues that the new manuscripts, while only partially parallel to the transmitted *Analects*, prove the existence of a collection of sayings attributed to Confucius already in place around 300 BCE, from which the transmitted *Analects* emerged in imperial times. The paper introduces the category of “*Analects*-like material” 論語類 to define this material, and to separate it from the “Kongzi material” (Hunter 2017). The distinction is necessary both to reflect how these manuscripts differ from other narratives involving the figure of Confucius, and also to improve the established understanding of the *Analects*’ textual history.

Frank Saunders Jr. (Hong Kong Chu Hai College)

Reconstructing the Zhuangzi on Fate (Ming 命) in Light of Guodian

This paper examines the concept of fate in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 through the lens of several Guodian manuscripts: “Qionгда yi shi” 窮達以時, “Tang Yu zhi dao” 唐虞之道, and “Xing zi ming chu” 性自命出. While these texts express some shared beliefs about fate—its overwhelming influence on one’s material welfare and individual nature, and the importance of self-cultivation—significant differences emerge upon closer examination concerning the value of morality, the value of political life, and the compatibility of conventional values with human nature. I focus on three main points of comparison to highlight these distinctions: First, I compare “Qionгда yi shi” with Book 17, “Autumn Floods,” of the *Zhuangzi*, emphasizing their shared faith in human resilience. Second, I compare “Tang Yu zhi dao” and an approach to fate more generally that appears in the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, particularly focusing on the compatibility of political life and conventional morality with self-cultivation. Third, I compare the primitivist chapters of the *Zhuangzi* against “Xing zi ming chu,” focusing on their divergent views on government, cultural creations, and human nature. By exploring the dialectic on fate between the *Zhuangzi* and Guodian texts, this study challenges the traditional demarcation between Confucian and Daoist schools of thought. Furthermore, it provides context for subsequent developments in early Chinese philosophy, particularly in texts like the *Mengzi* and *Xunzi*, concerning the interplay between fate, self-cultivation, and success.

Edward L. Shaughnessy (University of Chicago)

Did King Wen Kill His Father? On the Rewriting of History in China

The remarkable archaeological discoveries of the last fifty years, especially textual materials written on bamboo and silk, have caused historians to issue a call to “rewrite ancient Chinese history.” Understandable as this urge to rewrite history is, it is by no means uncontested, nor is it unprecedented. Past discoveries of ancient texts also prompted Chinese historians to propose rewriting ancient history, and might provide some context for the ways in which today’s historians wish to do so. Some new sources, such as the Shang-dynasty oracle-bone inscriptions first discovered at the turn of the twentieth century, required expanding the prevailing historical paradigm, but while they certainly stimulated new questions, they were readily absorbed within that paradigm. Other new sources, such as some of the manuscripts found at Dunhuang, were not so easily adapted, and required certain revisions in ideas about how Chinese literature had developed; these revisions have been more contested, but in the end have now been incorporated for the most part into the now prevailing paradigms of that history. However, there have also been other new sources that were so much at variance with the traditional paradigm, so shocking to historians’ sensibilities, that they were rewritten in their own right. Unfortunately, such rewriting can be so successful as to cover up all trace of the new source. In this brief essay, I propose to examine just one instance of this third type of new source, so shocking that while it attracted the attention of historians, but it was eventually rewritten in ways to render it more or less compatible with both the then existing paradigm and also with historians’ sensibilities. It is but a single instance, and one that took place well in the past. However, its implications for the subjectivity of historiography continue to be relevant in the present as contemporary historians go about rewriting history.

Ondrej Skrabal (Charles University Prague)

*Of Models and Punishments: Situating the Tsinghua Manuscript *Cheng ren (Accomplished Person) in the Warring States Textual Landscape*

Despite the wealth of unearthed manuscripts shedding new light on various aspects of Early Chinese thought and law, only with the publication of the Tsinghua manuscript *Cheng ren 成人 (Accomplished Person) in 2019 have we obtained the first direct source for the study of ancient Chinese legal thought. For a long time, the “Lü xing” 呂刑 (“Punishments of Lü”) chapter of the *Shangshu* 尚書 has been ascribed a paramount status in the discussions on punishments in Early China, both by the ancient philosophers and contemporary scholars, and its importance has been further confirmed by the recent archaeological discoveries of Warring States witnesses of this text in Xiajiatai and Qinjiazui. While in many regards betraying close links to “Lü xing,” *Cheng ren contains a number of idiosyncratic features in terms of themes, structure, and arguments, such as highlighting the agency of law officers and suggesting punishments for the violation of ritual norms. These features raise questions about the date of composition, provenance, and function of *Cheng ren. Following an inquiry into these issues, this paper will explore the implications *Cheng ren carries for our understanding of the status of “Lü xing” during the Warring States period and for the study of Early Chinese legal thought in general.

Yu-Lung TSENG (Etvös Loránd University)

Termination of Reclaiming Ordos Policy during the Jiajing Reign (1521-1567) in Ming China – Insights from Firearm Development and Utilization Based on Historical Records of the Ming Dynasty

The debate over the reclamation of Ordos (復河套議) during the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign (1522-1567) marked a crucial turning point in the history of Ming military policy. It shifted the military strategy towards the Mongols from an aggressive attack policy to a more conservative defensive approach. The deliberations within the Ming court of Jiajing were initiated by a memorial to the throne written by Zeng Xian 曾銑, a border official who advocated for a war against the Mongols. However, the emperor terminated the plan in less than two years. In his memorial to the throne, Zeng Xian emphasized the advantages of utilizing firearms in conflicts with the Mongols. This paper will assess the extent to which the development and use of firearms evolved in Ming China and examine the perspectives on employing these weapons within the Ming dynasty. Additionally, it will explore relevant materials regarding how the Mongols responded to the introduction of firearms and address the question of whether the Mongols themselves employed firearms against Ming China. Finally, a comprehensive evaluation will be conducted to determine if the Ming court could realistically achieve victory over the Mongols by adopting the firearm strategies proposed by Zeng Xian.

Lothar von Falkenhausen (UCLA)

Conceptual Challenges in Approaching the Economic Archaeology of Late Bronze Age/Iron Age China

The study of the material remains of economic activity in ancient China has made tremendous progress during recent years. In a forthcoming book, I am attempting a preliminary synthesis of the work done so far, and I try to present some of the research questions that might be profitably addressed at the next stage of research. But what, exactly, is economic archaeology, and how is one to approach that subfield of archaeology in such a way as to make optimal use of the evidence presently available from Late Bronze Age/Iron Age China? In this paper I offer some reflections on these issues and outline some of the choices I made in structuring my monograph.

Chun XU (Max Planck Institute, Berlin)

Making “Little Jiangnans” in the Late Imperial Frontiers

The imperial frontiers of late imperial China saw the blossoming of numerous “Little Jiangnans” across the southwest and northwest borderlands. Rather than adopting an art historical optic, this paper approaches such cultural transplantation through the analytical lens of governmentality, illuminating the ambition of local state agents to extend a socio-technical system and mode of statecraft native to the Lower Yangzi heartland into their own peripheral jurisdictions. As part of their governmental vision, these officials sought to reproduce in microcosm the “business model” underpinning imperial political economy within China’s agricultural core. To this end, they fostered built environments, economic networks, specialized crops and techniques that carried the imprint of the culturally prestigious Jiangnan region. The integration of new crops, new hydraulic infrastructure, and agronomic innovation in riziculture and pisciculture served to incorporate frontier territories into the fabric of the imperial economic order. By creating local replicas of Jiangnan’s cultural forms and productive logic, officials could showcase their domains as orderly, prosperous and refined—as thriving “Little Jiangnans” that demonstrated the reach and adaptability of the imperial mode of power far beyond its original geographical context. Examining this phenomenon through the analytical prism of governmentality thus illuminates the extension and re-embedding of state rationalities and mechanisms from core to peripheral areas of empire.



HISTORY (MODERN)

HISTORY (MODERN)

Thomas Aerts (University of Gothenburg)

Dynamics of Exclusion and State-Building: The Case of the Green Gang in 1930s Shanghai

The Green Gang (青帮 Qingbang), in particular its “French Concession group”, is the most powerful and notorious extra-legal group in Republican Shanghai. Many works have already explored its history. But its impact on Chinese society from a political and social point of view is still little studied. Doesn’t the Qingbang have more to tell than its own story? Couldn’t this story be the history of a certain China? In this paper, I therefore propose to revisit the case of the Qingbang in the 1930s and historicize it in a new way: fully integrating it into the history of extra-legality in modern China on the one hand, and fully integrating it into the history of state-building in 1930s China on the other. Built around the theses of historical and sociological works (Chevrier, Hibou, Bayart), I wish to draw attention to the dynamics of exclusion in this setting, fundamental to my Foucauldian approach: to show how exclusion in the broadest sense is central to such a modern society’s functioning. Through this “re-historicization,” I want to help establish a connection between the history of modern China and the history of its extra-legality, by showing that certain dynamics have had a profound impact on state-building in late modern China, and have contributed to its structuring and functioning, both internally and in its relationship with Chinese society.

Andrea Bréard (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Putting Chinese Characters (Logically) in Place: Giovanni Vacca’s (1872–1953) Schemes for Character Decomposition

As a trained mathematician and logician turned sinologist, and as a defender and active user of Volapük and Latino sine flexione, Giovanni Vacca took a logico-structural approach to Chinese characters and the syntax of the Chinese language. Whether schemes for the blind, for a possible mechanical typewriter, or alternatives to the 214 Kangxi radicals, he developed new encodings of Chinese characters into symbolic forms and an interest in new ways of ordering characters in dictionaries. In the absence of finalized publications by Vacca, my analysis is based on a variety of archival documents, often in the form of loose sheets and scattered marginal annotations in books. This documentary legacy also explains to a large extent why Vacca’s influence on language reform in China itself was limited if not to say non-existent. The case of Vacca nevertheless reveals that not only sinological networks were engaged in debates about the Chinese script in the early 20th century, but that mathematical circles in particular exchanged ideas both on Chinese as a universal language and, vice versa, universal language schemes as an alternative to the Chinese language.

Federico Brusadelli (University of Naples “L’Orientale”)

Conceptualizing “Self-government” in Republican China: Three Essays by Zhang Weici 张尉慈 (1890-1976)

In 1918, after returning to China holding a PhD from the University of Iowa (USA), Zhang Weici 张尉慈 (1890-1976) was appointed as the first professor of Political Science at Beijing University. He was a good friend of Hu Shih, and a prominent member of the Chinese “liberal camp,” that rose and fell – strongly influenced by Anglo-saxon concepts and connections – in the 1920s. During his tenure at Beida, besides translating some works of the liberal tradition into Chinese (as James Bryce’s *Modern Democracies*), Zhang authored a number of essays offering to the Chinese public accurate analyses of Western institutional and constitutional systems, with the aim of contributing to the development of a historical comparative approach to the study of politics and, more broadly, to the debate on the “modernization” of China. As a convinced federalist, Zhang Weici was particularly interested in the role played by sub-national units, especially at the city level, in the development of Euro-american modern institutions. In my paper, I will analyze three of his most interesting works – “The charter system of municipal self-government in America” (1920), “Theories of plural sovereignty” (1922) and the longer essay “Systems of municipal administration” (1925) – with the aim of presenting Zhang’s conceptualization of “self-government” (*zizhi* 自治) and municipal administration (*shizheng* 市政), and discussing his comparative look at the role played by urban socio-political structures in Western and Chinese history, within the larger framework of the global intellectual history of the early-20th century.

Igor Chabrowski (University of Warsaw)

A Much More Protracted Revolution: Southwestern China After the “Liberation,” 1949-1954

This paper aims at analyzing the protracted, painful, and largely failed process of state-building in Southwestern China (Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Xikang) in the first four years of the People’s Republic (1949-1954). In contrast to the narratives that point to the CCP’s success in establishing power, I will demonstrate that although the Party managed to eliminate all competitors for power, it governed the southwest in an extremely piecemeal fashion. In order to deepen the state’s reach, CCP engaged in a series of mass political campaigns that produced results contrary to expectations and unleashed a serious social and economic crisis. Even by 1952, Southwestern China was hardly under the CCP’s control, irrespective if we look at rural Sichuan, minority areas, or the border with French Indochina. Mass scale violence, new social organizations, depressed trade, localized famines, and transformed landownership, however, were effectively reconstructing the social order and shaping the new socialist China. My main argument is that the CCP in the southwest created a regime of permanent instability and failed to find effective solutions to issues of its own making. The mechanism of power was that of blaming troubles on the anti-communist forces and running forward with campaigns to resolve them. We should reflect, therefore, in what manner the young People’s Republic differed from other regional states: colonial French Indochina and postcolonial Burma.

Chih-hao CHEN (National Taiwan Normal University)

The Imagined and the Practical Boundaries: Map-Making in Qing-Ruled Taiwan

When the Qing Empire assumed control of Taiwan in 1683, the problem of how to effectively manage this peripheral island became its central concern. This paper explores the strategies and concerns of Qing Empire’s map-making during the 18th century, exploring its profound impacts on Taiwanese society. Between 1758 to 1783, the Qing ruling class produced at least eleven maps delineating Taiwan’s boundaries. The objectives were to formulate social and military policies facilitating efficient control while gaining a better understanding of Taiwanese society. Drawing inspiration from James C. Scott’s definition of “legibility” in statecraft, which refers to the ideologies a state imposes on its people to minimize the differences, this study examines the Qing Empire’s control strategy through its map making endeavors. It distinguishes between two layers of boundaries featured in Taiwan maps: the imagined boundary and the practical boundary. Qing maps often visualize the extent of its territory by employing symbolic iconography, creating an imagined boundary that represents unknown or untouched lands through schematic depictions of distant mountains and rivers. Contrastingly, the practical focus of the Qing Empire is on the “fanjie” (aboriginal boundary), serving as the boundary that delineated the controllable from the uncontrollable. I contend that the differentiation between the two types of boundaries on maps reflects the actual methodology employed by the Qing Empire in governing Taiwan.

Lejiamei CHEN (KU Leuven)

Intercultural Discussion of Ancient Chinese History Across the 18th Century: A Study of the Memoirs Written by Jesuit Writers in Beijing and European Savants in Paris

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the issue of ancient Chinese history aroused long debate among Europeans, especially among French savants and philosophers. As the earliest date of ancient Chinese history introduced by Jesuits was earlier than the period of Noah's Ark and the Great Flood, it posed a threat to the Vulgate Bible's chronology and the authority of the Bible. European, especially French theologians, philosophers and savants have written more than a hundred works related to this issue. At the same time, more than the threat to the biblical paradigm, the nature of ancient history discussion seems to have changed across the eighteenth century and has shown significant new aspects across the movement of thoughts. This study aims to discover the discussion of ancient Chinese history in the 18th century, a very important subject for the history of ideas and intellectual history. It combines and compares Jesuit and European works on ancient Chinese history across the eighteenth century and to enlarge the 1640-1740 framework built by Pinot to the end of the eighteenth century. By examining changes between Jesuit authors and differences between European savants and Jesuit authors, this study shows how the research focus on ancient Chinese history has changed throughout the eighteenth century. It further exhibits the evolution of Jesuit's intercultural question during the eighteenth century and examines how Chinese and European ideas interact with each other in the attempt of Jesuits to answer the question of their times.

Samuel Cheney (University of Edinburgh)

"Deafening Noise" or "Gorgeous Artifice": Responses to Opera in British Travel Writing from China, c. 1860 – c. 1940

Music was fundamental to British experiences of travel in late-Qing and early-Republican China. British travellers, despite possessing a limited understanding of the complexity and diversity of China's manifold musical traditions, nonetheless sought to experience and document the music of the country. Accordingly, records of operatic performances were particularly prominent components of travellers' sonic encounters with China in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, providing the opportunity to experience Chinese entertainment customs and to listen to a performance tradition that was frequently described as diametrically opposed to European musical norms. British listeners did not, however, approach China's varied operatic traditions with neutral ears. Rather, their encounters with Chinese opera were shaped by culturally specific 'ways of hearing' that constructed this performance tradition as representative of a variety of broader cultural themes. This paper explores how various British writers from China (including Constance Gordon-Cumming, Susan Townley, Christopher Isherwood, and Harold Acton) used Chinese opera as a tool to understand and explain Chinese civilization to their readers. It will argue that particular musical facets of operatic performance garnered racial significance in British minds, and that many British respondents frequently placed the acoustic and visual dimensions of Chinese opera in opposition, bolstering a broader notion that Chinese civilization looked good but sounded bad. In British writing from China, the opera, treated both as musical culture and visual spectacle, quite literally became a stage upon which broader debates about Chinese civilization were negotiated for British travellers in the country.

Federica Cicci (Ca' Foscari University of Venice/Heidelberg University)

In the Hands of Others: Female Medical-Missionary Practices and Relief Activities During Wartime China (1937-1945)

This study investigates the relationship between women, Catholicism, and medical-missionary activities during the years of the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War in China (1937-1945). The paper primarily focuses on how women effectively collaborated in relief activities in the international and transnational context of Manchuria, examining the involvement of both local and foreign Catholic women who undertook specific roles across diverse areas of assistance. It also explores the central role of women in the narrative of relief through their representation in media, local press, and official accounts of their religious affiliations. In particular, this work delves into the experiences of Swiss Catholic Sisters from Ingenbohl and the local virgins, the Oblate Sisters of Saint Teresa, aiming to highlight the opportunities the war provided to expand their social roles and exercise greater agency in the religious and public spheres. Drawing upon a collection of written and visual archival materials, this paper outlines how these testimonies often shape the perception of this historical period in Manchuria. Moreover, it sheds light on how engagement in relief work contributed to the elevation of these women as active and influential religious figures within a foreign context.

Laura De Giorgi (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

A Successful Failure: Giuseppe Regis' "Contact Zone" in Socialist Beijing 1957-1960

This paper explores the experience of an Italian economist and intellectual, Giuseppe Regis, who lived with his family in Beijing from 1957 to 1960. As an expert sent by the Italian Communist Party (ICP), Regis's task was to study the Chinese way to Socialism and Chinese economy as well as to work for the development of commercial cooperation between Italy and the People's Republic of China. After being back to Italy, he remained engaged in editorial and political activities supporting Maoist China in the 1960s and 1970s. Contributing to the historical research of the exchanges and transnational networks between PR China and the West during the Cold War (es. Romano Zanier 2014; Shaufelbuehl, Wyss, Zanier 2018), the paper starts from a close reading of the private writings of Giuseppe Regis during his sojourn in China, still unpublished. Whereas these writings shed new light on the political dynamics between the CCP and ICP in the context of the crisis of Sino-Soviet relations, the paper will mainly focus on an analysis of the social network of Regis and his family in Socialist Beijing, including their relations with the Chinese institutions and colleagues. These writings reveal the complex interplay between the personal and the public and between emotions and ideology in shaping Regis' "contact zone" (Pratt 2003; Schatz, De Giorgi Ludes, 2020) in Cold War China, to be seen as an arena where the dynamic and unstable interactions between him and Chinese rediscussed and redefined the meanings of *nei* 内 and *wai* 外 in Socialist China.

Fredrik Fällman (University of Gothenburg)

Salvation of a Different Kind? Christian-CPC Interaction in 1930s Hubei – He Wei, Li Rui and Their Missionary Connections

According to Li Rui 李锐 (1917-2019) underground party organizers in Wuhan in the 1930s were welcomed by some foreign missionaries to meet in church premises for protection, pretending to hold church meetings. Crucial to these contacts were party members with a Christian background, one case being He Wei 何伟 (1910-1973). He was born as Huo Hengde 霍恒德 in a Hunan Christian family, and finished his career as PRC Minister of Education 1964-1966. He Wei was a central organizer of underground party activity in Hubei and kept a network of Christian contacts also after joining the party. Missionaries supporting the CPC faced double risks, both in relation to their status as foreign entity in regard to the KMT government, but also internally with many colleagues being anti-communist. This paper makes an investigation into the connections between the CPC and foreign missionaries, and how party members during this period could still be active Christians without obvious difficulties. My investigation relies on archival material, personal recollections, and fragmented information in historical sources. Besides untangling the Christian-CPC connections as such, I try to find preliminary answers to questions such as: Did the notion of "saving the country" act as a parallel to the Christian message of salvation? Were the exchanges reciprocal also on an ideological level, besides mere friendly relations?

Federica Ferlanti (Cardiff University)

Engineering Chinese Society: The Mobilization of Civil Servants in the 1930s

This paper makes the case that the Nationalists' one-party state system embedded itself in Chinese society through a mix of civilian mobilization, wide-ranging politicization and militarization, and state centralization which started before the war and continued during the war against Japan, and it argues that civil servants (公務員 *gongwuyuan*) were an essential part of this process. The paper focuses on the relationship between the Nationalists and civil servants at the central and lower levels of administration in the 1930s and is based on archival materials that record the mobilization imposed upon civil servants by the Nationalist government. More specifically, it analyzes activities and forms of organization among civil servants associated with the New Life Movement (新生活運動 *Xin shenghuo yundong*) and shows the way in which the Nationalists (re)interpreted the civil servant's role: from that of an administrator to that of an activist and model for the broader population. Civil servants joined the Nationalists' mobilization campaign and endorsed the New Life ethos as part of the state-building project and through a system of compliance and consensus. Overall, the transmission of nationalistic and patriotic feelings fuelled through community service and different training courses were integral to consensus-building among civil servants and contributed to the consolidation of the one-party state system in China.

Joshua A. Fogel (York University)

The Emergence of Esperanto Movements in China and Japan

Esperanto emerged in Chinese and Japanese discourse in the first decade of the 20th century. It was primarily Chinese not living in China who popularized it, and Chinese in France (e.g., Wu Zhihui) openly called for it to replace their own native language which they tended to dub hopelessly out of date or even barbaric. This led to vitriolic debates with conservative nationalists (e.g., Zhang Taiyan). Meanwhile, during its first two decades in Japan, Esperanto was never seen as more than a vehicle for international communication and world peace. Only later would Japanese anarchists suggest that Japanese be abandoned in favor of Esperanto. Why were these differences so stark? What communication, if any, transpired between Chinese and Japanese Esperantists? What would Zamenhof have thought?

Clara Galzerano (University of Trento)

The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in the Evolution of Sino-Italian Relations: The Case of Italy-China Friendship Association (1962-1977)

Political relations between the Italian and the Chinese Communist parties (PCI and CCP) deteriorated because of the emergence of the Sino-Soviet split (1960). From 1962 onwards, pro-Chinese groups drifted away from the PCI and decided to create a "friendship association," the Italian Association for Cultural Relations and Friendship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) or the Italy-China Friendship Association (Associazione Italia-Cina, AIC). Based on fresh archival research and oral sources, the paper presentation will analyse the evolution of the AIC during the Cold War period. It will be stressed that the Italy-China Friendship Association tried to pursue different goals as it went through four different stages: the split with the PCI (1962-1965); the affiliation with the Italian Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (1966-1970); the creation of a "mass organization" (1971-1976); the building of a "non-political friendship" with the Chinese (1977-). The presentation will focus on the cooperation and the disputes between the Association and the local Maoist parties, the other Italian institutions involved in cultural relations with China and the Chinese institutions and authorities, like Guoji shudian, Luxingshe, the Chinese Embassy in Bern and the Chinese People's Association for the Friendship with Foreign Countries. It will also offer a comparative perspective on Western European "friendship associations" with the PRC during the Cold War. It will be stated that in general their evolution converged, but the AIC case presents some special features, due to the Italian internal situation and the peculiar evolution of political relations between Rome and Beijing.

Natascha Gentz (University of Edinburgh)

Navigating Press Laws in China: Hu Jiwei (1916-2021) and the Complexities of Crafting Media Legislation in the Reform Era

This paper delves into the intellectual and professional trajectory of Hu Jiwei, a prominent and outspoken veteran journalist who was playing a pivotal role in China's media landscape. Starting his journalistic career in Yan'an he was editor of the *Renmin Ribao* from 1952 to 1983. In the late 1980s, he assumed a pivotal role in formulating press laws for China. Commissioned by Hu Yaobang, Hu led a working group tasked with drafting media legislation to provide a safer legal framework for journalistic activities. Notably, this group also included liberal veteran journalists from the Republican period. The group ceased convening after the events in 1989. What followed was a public critique of Hu Jiwei's 'bourgeois liberal views on journalism.' Hu meticulously chronicled his career and contributed theoretical writings on Chinese media in his four-volume work titled *Hu Jiwei's Self-Selected Collection*. Privately published in 2002 in a small edition for internal circulation among family and friends only, it also reveals the internal workings of the "press law group." Drawing from this collection and external sources, the paper explores the complex legal, professional and political discussions on press laws of the 1980s within the context of modern China's media history. It thus examines the intricacies involved in drawing legal boundaries and navigating the limits and leeways of public expression in the Reform Era.

Anne Gerritsen (University of Warwick)

"Of a Cosmic Nature": Asian Art and Travel in Visser's Reisbrieven (1921-1922)

In the early 1920s, a Dutch engineer and latterly collector and curator of Asian art by the name of Herman Visser (1890-1965) embarked on a series of travels to the United States and to Asia to extend his knowledge of Asian Art. He documented his experiences in a series of 25 letters, which were published in one of the main Dutch newspapers. Entitled 'Travel letters about Asian art' ('Reisbrieven over Aziatische Kunst'), the letters have recently been rediscovered. Several things make these letters noteworthy. They stem from, and shed light on, an era in which European art connoisseurs were beginning to take note of Asian art as more than an ethnographic curiosity and advocate for seeing East Asian art as part of a globally shared human culture. They are also emphatically entitled 'travel letters,' although this aspect of the letters has not received any attention to date. Visser travelled from the US to Asia, visiting, amongst other places, Java and Bali (affectionally referred to as 'our Indies'). As Visser's letters demonstrate, these early attempts at establishing an authoritative, Western body of knowledge about Chinese art emerged from travel, enabling him to see art in temples, halls and domestic spaces. As knowledge about Asian art became more professionalized and art historical, this contextual information disappeared, and travel was no longer seen as the best way to learn about Asian art. This paper will seek to bring these early perspectives of travel, art, and material culture in conversation with each other.

Bryna Goodman (University of Oregon)

In the Interstices of Empire: The Politics of Chinese and Japanese Stock Exchanges in Republican China

Chinese stock exchange law and Chinese stock exchanges themselves took shape in the midst of Japanese imperial ventures in China and an array of implanted Japanese financial institutions on Chinese soil, including some thirty Japanese stock exchanges, established between the years 1906 and 1945. Many of these Japanese stock exchanges were established in Japanese colonial leasehold territory in Northeast China; others were established in the key commercial ports of Shanghai, Hankou, Tianjin and Guangzhou. These unusual and little-studied extraterritorial stock exchanges—and the counterpoised Chinese concerns to protect the Chinese economy that they aroused—were foundational to Chinese ideas of finance and the establishment of competing Chinese stock exchanges. The early history of Chinese stock exchanges should thus be understood in the twin frameworks of both Japanese imperial financial ventures and a politics of Chinese resistance to Japan. A single-city or purely national, economic, or financial analysis of Chinese stock exchange formation would miss this crucial context. This paper provides a preliminary overview of some of the characteristics of Japanese colonial deployment of stock exchanges in China based on Japanese archives as well as Chinese materials, with attention to national and local politics, legal and jurisdictional questions, and relations between Chinese and Japanese financial understandings, authorities, and entrepreneurial agents.

Sofia Graziani (University of Trento)

Chinese Communists and Cold War Youth Internationalism. The World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students' Initiatives in Mao's China

In the aftermath of the WWII China participated in the transnational youth movements that sprang out of the desire of freedom, democracy and world peace, sending delegates to newly born global organizations (the World Federation of Democratic Youth, WFDY and the International Union of Students, IUS), which catalyzed international youth cooperation, eventually becoming Soviet-sponsored 'front' organizations in the context of the Cold War. By tracing Chinese participation in the IUS and WFDY with a focus on the joint initiatives organized in China in the 1950s, this paper reveals the role Chinese youth played in the world stage as representatives of the PRC in shaping the agenda of young internationalists and promoting transnational interactions and exchanges, while conducting people's diplomacy and building a network of personal ties across blocs and with the third world. Mainly based on archival sources, youth congresses' proceedings and memories, the paper aims to contribute to the literature on youth activism and the cold war, decentering and problematizing the history of 'front' international organizations, for long seen as tool of the bipolar cold war and treated as homogeneous groups dominated by Moscow. It also continues the work of those scholars that have complicated the long-standing view of Mao-era China as sealed off from the outside world, by pursuing a new transnational approach that shifts the focus from high diplomacy to multi-level interactions and collaborations across blocs and with the third world.

Zhongyuan HU (KU Leuven)

Wandering in the Garden: Knowledge Circulation of Jesuits' Encounters with Exoticness in Late Imperial China

This paper investigates Jesuit missionaries' enquiries into Chinese edible plants and botanical knowledge from the late 16th to the 18th centuries. The encounters with exoticness occurred in three dimensions — the actual, textual, and spiritual gardens. The actual garden refers to Jesuits' learning resources, including but not limited to their perceptions in Chinese gardens, orchards, and fields, as well as their firsthand studies through multi-lingual botanical books. The textual garden implies missionaries' writings and paintings to record the exoticness of the faraway land, which later were published back in Europe to provide an authorized image of China. In the spiritual garden, the food items are examined under the Christian worldview and Chinese imperial context to investigate their roles of acquiring patrons to assist Jesuits' missionary work. It traces the dynamic process knowledge formation, transmission, reception, and circulation to reveal the participation of various parts of the world, such as China and Europe, as well as America, India, and Southeast Asia, in this process. It argues that the illustrated books about Chinese edible plants are not only seen as media of knowledge circulation, but it also served as a visualized space of the Eastern world, where people identified the exotic others, and as tangible evidence which present the diversity of God's creation, which assisted missionaries with their preaching work in China.

Shan HUANG (SOAS)

From Deer to Musk: A Sensory Journey Along the Silk Road (15th-18th Centuries)

This research explores the intertwined relationship between knowledge culture and socioeconomic exchanges during the 15th-18th centuries through the lens of musk, a key commodity in religious, pharmaceutical, and perfumery practices. Examining how long-distance trade shaped perceptions of musk beyond its inherent value, this study reveals how public imaginations of its efficacy and authenticity transcended its original context and even state control, ultimately contributing to the decline of musk deer populations in Asia. By retracing musk's journey from its source regions in East Asia to the Mediterranean Sea, this study analyzes commercial patterns through hunting methods, preservation techniques, transport routes, and final trade networks. It aims to revise the prevalent assumption that Tibet was the primary musk producer, unveiling a broader and geographically complex picture of its production and trade during this era. Ultimately, understanding the musk trade and distribution offers valuable insights into economic, cultural, and social exchanges along the Silk Road during this dynamic period.

Yumi ISHII (Tohoku University)

Transgenerational Transmission of the Memory of the Sino-Japanese War

How do Chinese people remember the Sino-Japanese war today, when almost all the war generations (people who directly experienced the war) have passed away? In this presentation, I will consider the transgenerational transmission of war memories. As a Japanese researcher, I have been conducting oral history research for 15 years in Yu County, Shanxi Province, which was one of the front lines of the Sino-Japanese War. In particular, I will focus on several families from the interviews and consider how their war experience has been passed on as memories within family members, with its relationship with post-war society and communities in their village. In order to discuss the psychological issue of how individual memories are inherited, I will use the concept of “Chosen Trauma” which is developed by Turkish psychiatrist V. Volkan to explain the relationship of war memory and forming of group identity in conflict zones in the former Soviet Union.

Thomas Jansen (University of Wales Trinity Saint David)

Timothy Richard (1845-1919: A Welsh Translator in Shanghai, 1891-1915)

In 1891, Welsh Baptist missionary Timothy Richard (1845-1919) became the head of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese (SDCK), Guangxue hui 廣學會 in Chinese. In addition to overseeing the publication of the Society’s flagship publication *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報 (*A Review of the Times*), Richard himself wrote or translated an estimated 100 of the SDCK’s 250 publications. Despite its centrality for the work of the SDCK, many aspects of the translation work undertaken by Richard and his collaborators is still poorly understood, including its organisation, the process of selecting titles suitable for translation, collaboration between missionaries and Chinese translators, or specific translation practices employed by individual translators. My presentation will first provide an overview of the translation activities of the SDCK and then, given the scarcity of external sources, focus on an in-depth analysis of the bibliographical and paratextual information of the translated books and articles. The aim is to provide a richer picture of the translation enterprise of the SDCK as a transcultural space at a crucial stage in China’s modern history, and of the role that Timothy Richard played in it.

Zifeng JIN (Kyoto University)

The Chinese Community in Manchuria and the Manchuria-Mongolia Railway Issue on the Eve of the Manchurian Incident

Between late 1930 and early 1931, tensions in Sino-Japanese relations intensified dramatically, primarily due to sensationalized Japanese media reports about the South Manchuria Railway Company’s crisis (滿鉄の危機) and an alleged anti-Japanese pact between Chang Hsueh-liang and Chiang Kai-shek. Considering the local dynamics in Manchuria, this study designates the period from November 1930 to January 1931 as a critical phase in the intensification of the Manchuria-Mongolia Railway issue (滿蒙鐵道問題). This study examines the Manchuria-Mongolia Railway issue, tracing its origins to January 1930 with the Mukden government’s proposal for the Hulutao Port (葫蘆島) construction, and culminating in the Manchurian Incident about one year and nine months later. Adopting a threefold analytical framework, the research delves into the interplay and discord between the Mukden and Nanking governments, the divergent views within Mukden’s officialdom and its civil society, and the mutual perceptions of Chinese and Japanese individuals in Manchuria. The objective is to uncover the basis of the Manchurian Chinese community’s (encompassing both officials and civilians) perceptions regarding the Manchuria-Mongolia Railway issue and to analyze how their anti-Japanese actions, particularly concerning the railway dispute, influenced Japanese public opinion and aggravated the Manchurian situation. This exploration is crucial in understanding why many Japanese settlers in Manchuria supported the Kwantung Army’s military actions during the Manchurian Incident.

Shin KAWASHIMA (University of Tokyo)

Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy, 1910s-1930s: Focusing on Sino-Japanese Relations and the Nanjing Incidents

Before 1937, when the Japanese and Chinese mentioned a “Nanjing Incident,” they would think of the incidents that had happened in that city in 1913 and 1927. However, their understanding of those facts differed considerably in the two countries. In 1913, both the Chinese and Japanese governments agreed on the facts, and both sides were willing to prevent the deterioration of relations. In 1927, however, Chiang Kai-shek did not consider himself responsible for the second incident. He believed that the ringleaders were either Communists or defeated soldiers on the Northern side, as well as local ruffians. Moreover, the Beijing government, which had diplomatic relations with Japan, did not have much information about Nanjing. And the KMT Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not under Chiang’s command, but existed in Wuhan. Because of this diversity of actors, in China it was not clear who was responsible for dealing with the incident. On the Japanese side, however, public opinion was agitated, and within the government there was opposition to Shidehara’s policy, leading to calls for the adoption of a hardline policy toward China. This gap, of course, became even wider concerning the third “incident,” which happened when China and Japan were at war. Although there are several studies on the three incidents, most scholars have focused only on sources from either country. This presentation combines viewpoints from both sides, comparing perceptions and policies. As the first two presentations of the panel discuss the Japanese perspective, the focus here is more on Chinese sources.

Albert Kozik (University of Warsaw)

Resounding Patterns: The Melody of Chinese-Style Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Europe

The paper examines the popularity of Chinese bells in diverse eighteenth-century European texts and chinoiseries. Both large bronze-cast bells and little chimes often appeared in descriptions of the Ming and Qing cities disseminated in the early modern period and were accompanied by discussions on the characteristics of Chinese music and the alleged physical or cultural factors that made the Chinese admire the sound of bells. Drawing on numerous historical sources in various European languages, the analysis will first focus on visual and written representations of bells included in scholarly treatises as well as travelers’ accounts before unpacking how the sound of bells was imagined in Europe. Particular attention will be paid to the sensual properties of little chimes that adorned Chinese architecture. Finally, European imitations of such bells will be written into the context of theoretical debates on the nature of the “Chinese Ear” and sensual properties of architecture.

Lars Peter Laamann (SOAS)

The Emergence of Scientific Medicine in Modern China (1880s–1940s): An Unintended Consequence of the Christian Medical Missions?

The present paper argues that the medical advances which the Christian missionary movement accomplished at the turn of the twentieth century were due to the contemporaneous expansion of scientific medicine precisely at the point in time when the missionaries had achieved complete freedom to proselytise. This historical coincidence was subsequently interpreted as a divine sign that their presence was an inextricable part of civilisational progress. The Christian missionaries who arrived in China in the wake of the Treaty of Tianjin (1858) were predominantly driven by their spiritual calling to salvage four hundred million fellow humans from eternal damnation. However, in due course missionaries arrived to whom this task implied the freeing of the Chinese from the shackles of “mediaeval darkness” in terms of scientific awareness. This assumption not only contradicted the fact that the exchange of medical knowledge between the West – i.e. the civilisational centres of the Roman-Hellenic world, Persia, India and the Islamicate centres of learning – and imperial China had already produced sophisticated medical traditions, but also that the Western missionaries simply made use of the newly available medical solutions without ever intending to usher in a scientific revolution in medical practice. Based on archival evidence, this paper will illustrate how this development led to the myth of a divinely ordained medical mission, rather than an accelerated instance of intercivilisational exchange.

Simon LAM (University of Oxford)

Party Work at the Grassroots: The Post-war Kuomintang Shunde County Branch, 1945-1949

After eight long years of war, the Kuomintang (KMT) made a triumphant return to the formerly Japanese-occupied county of Shunde, Guangdong, in late 1945. Buoyed by the euphoria of victory, the Shunde party branch unveiled ambitious post-war plans to not only rebuild pre-existing networks and administration, but also expand the party's influence down into towns and villages. Utilising archival and newspaper material drawn from the Shunde District Archives, this paper examines the party work of the KMT following its reestablishment in post-war Shunde, which remained under the party's control until the very end of the Chinese Civil War. This paper argues that while the KMT county branch had genuine interest, and indeed a sense of urgency, in reaching out to the grassroots level, their work was hampered by both the county government as well as the central KMT. The intertwined relationship between party and state led to the monopolisation of governance and talent by the county government, relegating the party to a subsidiary role. The sidelining of party work was not helped by the lack of support and funding from the central KMT, which justified its disinterest by claiming local branches should be self-sufficient under the principle of "local self-governance." By the time a communist insurgency had reemerged in the region in 1948, it was clear that the KMT Shunde county branch had failed in its efforts to establish a positive image of the party at the grassroots.

Tien-Chun LEE and Han-Ting PENG (National Chengchi University)

The Eye on East Asia: The Indigenous Images of Taiwan in Nanpo Dozoku (The Ethnographical Journal of the South-Eastern Asia and Oceania (1931-1944)

The aim of this article is to delve into the imagery of Taiwan's indigenous peoples during the Japanese colonial era, focusing on the quarterly journal *Nanpo Dozoku* (The Ethnographical Journal of the South-Eastern Asia and Oceania) (1931-1944) published by the Folklore Society of Taipei Imperial University. It aims to explore how these images reflected the social and political contexts of that time. The term "images" in this article is not limited to visual representations such as pictures or images but also encompasses the written accounts by different outsiders from various periods. In fact, the regional context serves as a form of imagery, encompassing tribal and national images, all of which contribute significantly to the literary perspective. Therefore, this article also includes the portrayal of indigenous peoples as perceived by Han Chinese writers, the representation of indigenous peoples in the writings of Japanese authors, and the related impact of these images. This article analyzes the articles, images, and research within the journal, discussing how they reflected the societal and academic perspectives of the era and the understanding of Taiwan's indigenous peoples. It examines how the images in *Nanpo Dozoku* (The Ethnographical Journal of the South-Eastern Asia and Oceania) portrayed perceptions of Taiwan's indigenous cultures and their impact on the understanding and preservation of the island's cultural diversity at the time, specifically concerning the traditional practices of Taiwan's indigenous peoples. Moreover, it explores their significance in the study of Taiwan's indigenous peoples and cultural diversity.

Lei LEI (SOAS)

"Storing Wealth Among the People": The Shifting Dynamics of Economic Thought in the Late Qing China

The existing literature on "storing wealth among the people" (*cangfu yumin*) emphasizes the redistributive role of the government in the pre-1850 civilian granary system (Will et al. 1991; Dustan 1996) and the contribution of market mechanisms and positive government interventions to the prosperity of private economy in the 18th and late 19th century (Rowe 1993 & 2001; Janku 2014). This paper investigates how the late Qing crisis compelled the state to adopt a more activist position through a re-examination of collected statecraft writings (*huangchao jingshi wenbian*). Caught in a dilemma between prioritizing the ideal state of "storing wealth among the people" and the perceived need of "enriching the state" (*fuguo*) in the formula of "storing wealth within the state" (*cangfu yuguo*), the debate evolves into discussions on "storing wealth among the businessmen" (*cangfu yushangmin*), "demonstrating sympathy for merchants" (*xushang*), and further to the "promulgation of a commercial law" (*ding shanglü*), and finally the "Company Law" (*gongsi fa*). Eventually, a state-dominated economic reform aiming to stimulate the private economy by privatizing state-policed enterprises, manifested in the 1904 Company Code. This paper concludes with three findings: 1) changing official attitudes altered the social ethos of despising commerce and merchants; 2) the state attempted to be a promoter and regulator of the private economy; 3) this led to a fundamental shift in central government policy from the economic thought of "storing wealth among the people," upheld since the Kangxi reign, to the economic idea of "storing wealth within the state" at the dynasty's end.

Emily Leigh-Pemberton (SOAS)

Themes of Impiety and Heteropraxy in the Writings of Protestant Missionaries during the Late Qing (1808-1911)

This paper focuses on Western Protestant missionaries in the late nineteenth century and their perceptions of orthodoxy and impiety in Muslim religious practice in the Qing empire. Remarks about orthodoxy and impiety filled pages of articles about Islam in China. Protestants emphasized orthodoxy over orthopraxy, which affirmed their understanding of Islam as a religion demanding uniformity of practice as right belief. They emphasized that Islamic practice was merely a system of external rituals, like Roman Catholicism, which could not cleanse their sin. Comparisons between Catholics and Muslims regularly appeared in Protestant writings. Christian missionaries measured Islamic orthopraxy in China against a textual ideal and practice of Arab Muslims in the traditional centres of Islam. Missionaries were especially preoccupied with the worship of emperor tablets in mosques, the burning of incense and the lack of adherence to the halal diet. They hoped that the lax practice would allow for easier conversion to Christianity, but they were impeded by perceived similarities between Christian and Muslim scriptures. Late Qing officials who scrutinized the orthodoxy of certain religious sects and practices and repressed those that did not meet the imperial standards or were a threat to social order reinforced Protestant ideas of orthodox and heterodox Islamic practice. This topic draws attention to Muslim-Christian relations in the late Qing, the overlap between anti-Islamic and anti-Catholic attitudes amongst Protestant missionaries in the late nineteenth century, and the influence of Qing officials over the attitudes of Protestant missionaries.

Yi LI (Aberystwyth University)

The Rangoon Welsh Society Among the British Armed Forces, 1945-46

Between mid-1945 and late 1946, a Rangoon Welsh Society was active among the British armed forces stationed in Rangoon. Many of its members had recently experienced battles in Burma and India, awaiting repatriation to Wales or relocation to the remaining theatres during the last stage of WWII. Based on bilingual archival materials from the National Library of Wales, this paper unveils the development of this short-lived, small wartime group, exploring its personnel, key activities, and its relationship with other similar national groups within the army, the Welsh civilians, and their home communities in Wales. Why did they establish a society emphasising a common Welsh identity? How did they see themselves within Britain and the British colonial world? What were their connections to fellow Welsh individuals, other nationalities of Britain, and British subjects in colonial Asia in the aftermath of a devastating war? And whether or not this wartime bondage persisted in the post-war years? Focusing on the Welsh presence in WWII Southeast Asia, this paper examines the significance and limitations of the Society in promoting Welsh-ness in a wartime British colonial location, echoing the demands and challenges of Wales' long quest for a unique position in Britain and the British world in the mid twentieth century.

Xiao LIN (SOAS)

Manchu Intellectuals Studying in Japan (1896-1945)

This study examines the establishment and evolving identity of Manchu intellectuals who studied in Japan. Spanning from 1896 to 1945, the research explores the complex interplay between their experiences in Japan and the construction of their national, ethnic, and cultural identities. Through the analysis of key events, this study aims to uncover the dynamic evolution of their thinking within a contentious social backdrop. By drawing from diverse historical sources in mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan, it investigates the significant role played by these intellectuals in successive governments and their influence on modern China. Ultimately, this research delves into the intricate process of identity formation and sheds light on the multifaceted nature of their ultimate identity transformation.

LIU Chengcheng (SOAS)

The History of the Manchu Translated Bible (1780s to 1835)

This paper will focus on the translation effort by Louis de Poirot, S.J. (賀清泰, 1735–1813), aimed at producing a complete version of the Bible in Manchu. Having a Biblical translation which could be approved by both the Qing dynasty and the Catholic Church would have rendered Christianity “orthodox” in the late imperial Chinese definition. The Manchus established the Qing empire in the seventeenth century and ruled over China for more than two centuries until 1911. As the native tongue of the ruling dynasty, it was the second official language of the Qing empire. As a minority group in charge of governing China, a major issue facing the Manchus was to balance their original beliefs with pre-existing Chinese traditions, but also with those that had arrived relatively recently in China, such as Christianity. Despite their small numbers, Christian converts frequently belonged to the commercial and scholarly elites. With the arrival of the Manchus, and the addition of the military banner units to the highest echelons of Qing society, the Catholic missionaries who had once served at the Ming court but were now employed as mathematical experts, court painters or translators, were keen to convert the Manchu banners. A major obstacle in this pursuit arrived in the shape of the anti-missionary edict of 1724, which threatened punitive action against all Manchu converts. Two generations later, in the 1780s, the translation of the Bible into Manchu was initiated by the court Jesuit Louis Antoine de Poirot. The history of the Manchu Bible translation, albeit brief, was significant both in defining Christianity as an “orthodox” religious tradition and, perhaps unintentionally, also in preserving the Manchu language for posterity.

Helena F. S. Lopes (Cardiff University)

Welsh in Twentieth-Century Hong Kong: World War Two and Beyond

This paper analyses the Welsh presence in twentieth century Hong Kong, with a special focus on the Second World War period and the post-war period up to the present-day, drawing on a range of archival sources from Wales and Hong Kong, as well as on fieldwork interviews in Hong Kong. This presentation focuses on two key institutions – the St. David’s Society of Hong Kong (founded in the 1900s) and the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir (set up in the 1970s) – and it zooms in on the diverse experience of Welsh POWs and civilian internees in Hong Kong during the Second World War and its legacies. This includes the activities and impact of one prominent Welsh veteran who spent decades campaigning for the rights of the Chinese women in Hong Kong whose husbands had served with the British armed forces. I argued that the Welsh experience in colonial and post-colonial Hong Kong is one marked by contradictory trends: both unity and divergent interests as Welsh, and both close interaction and separation from the majority Chinese population in Hong Kong.

Sining LYU (SOAS)

Sovereignty Under Siege: Plague Control and its Impact on Qing China’s Modernization and Diplomacy

The battle against infectious disease extends beyond the disease itself. In 1911, the Qing government faced multiple challenges, contending with foreign powers and internal rebellions when a pneumonic plague struck their Manchurian homeland. Foreign powers threatened to intervene militarily if the Qing government failed to contain the disease promptly, thereby encroaching upon the empire’s sovereignty. To combat the plague, the Qing government for the first time employed Western-trained doctors and adopted quarantine measures and Western medicine. Within a year, the spread of the plague diminished, leading the Qing government to hold an international medical conference in Manchuria to showcase their success, financed through borrowed funds. While existing historical research on the 1911 Manchurian plague primarily focuses on Wu Liande, the leading doctor, and plague control, this paper investigates the political repercussions and diplomatic negotiations arising from the outbreak. By examining new archival materials including memorials, business letters, and newspapers from the No.1 Historical Archives, Tianjin Provincial Archive, Liaoning Provincial Archive, and Jilin Provincial Archive, I argue that the Manchurian plague propelled the modernization process of China’s government. It reshaped government roles and the understanding of the need for protective sovereignty in China.

Kexin MA (SOAS)

Refashioning Antiquarian Orthodoxy: The Guwan tu 《古玩圖》 and the Practice of Archaism under the Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723–35)

The current paper proposes a reexamination of the *Guwan tu* (*Pictures of Ancient Playthings*) handscroll in the British Museum as a testament of the refashioning of the Confucian antiquarian orthodoxy under the Yongzheng emperor (r.1723–35). By observing the depicted *guwan* alongside comparable antiquities and Qing reproductions, the paper delves into the delusive nature of the *Guwan tu* and the association between the scroll and the co-existence of ‘real’ antiquities and ‘fake’ archaised objects at the Yongzheng court. Building upon this, the paper aims to reveal the distinct understanding towards the past in the Yongzheng context and uncover how antiquities, arguably the existing traces of the past, would take on new forms, functions, and meanings in conjunction with an imagined past constructed by the Qing court. The *Guwan tu* handscroll, characterised by its illusionistic depiction of varied archaic objects, has long been viewed as a pictorial record of antiquities from the Qing imperial collection, signalling the Qing court’s interest in antiquarianism. Meanwhile, the presence of stacked vessels and such later added accessories as spoons, lids, and metal inner tubes hints at the utilitarian nature of the depicted “antiquities,” which were supposed to serve as “sacralised” sources of classical knowledge and ancient traditions. This, in turn, leads to the following primary questions: what were the models for these depicted objects—antiquities or their reproductions, which could function as utensils at the court? And how did the representation of reproductions influence the discourse of “orthodoxy” in the Qing era?

Stephen McDowall (University of Edinburgh)

Encountering Death on the Late Qing Tourist Trail

Execution grounds in Chinese treaty ports were visited throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by European soldiers, diplomats, missionaries and sojourners, and the written accounts these men and women produced circulated widely in various media. Many described executions they had personally witnessed or had heard about second-hand, and some purchased photographic evidence to give visual substance to their extraordinary tales. As a number of scholars have demonstrated, such accounts conveyed messages about racial hierarchies and imperial power to receptive audiences back home, and were deployed as powerful justifications for extraterritoriality and other privileges enjoyed by Western visitors. Yet focussing solely on their role within this imperialist discourse risks obscuring another context in which execution accounts were produced and consumed. The late nineteenth century was not only a highpoint of European imperialism, but also a period in which the spectacle of the execution in Europe disappeared from public view. This paper argues that although visitors typically portrayed themselves as disinterested observers who were disgusted by the horrors they witnessed, the practices described above are better understood as part of a developing tourist culture that valued this spectacle more highly than its participants acknowledged. The China these men and women ‘encountered’ reflected expectations established by travel accounts and tourist itineraries, and tells us much more about a preoccupation with violent penal practice on the part of Western observers than about the Chinese society they sought to describe.

Gotelind Müller-Saini (Heidelberg University)

Universal Language, World Language, or International Language? Reflections on Chinese Discussions on Esperanto and its Role in the Early 20th Century

Language has been a key site of contestation among Chinese intellectuals in the early 20th century. What is its nature? Which is its function? Whom does it serve? How should it ideally look like? Perceived problems with Chinese language(s) and the Chinese script triggered a reconsideration of their value, utility, and feasibility for the future. On one hand, these debates were embedded in the context of similar discussions going on in, above all, Japan, on the other they were connected to those in the West. In the eyes of Chinese intellectuals, their suddenly perceived linguistic disadvantage in the modern age and the apparent decline in status of Chinese in East Asia, the presumed ‘Sinosphere,’ contrasted with the global utility of (multiple) Western languages. This rendered the idea of a universal, world, or international language attractive, and the (at the time recent) language project Esperanto appeared to be a valid, modern, and internationally promising solution to various language problems. The contestations about what Esperanto is or should be, which problems it could, would, and should solve (and which not), and where its role in China’s overall language-scape should be (or should not be at all) was reflected in the way it was terminologically framed. However, such contestations over terminology were not conducted in a vacuum: as the paper is going to argue, political ascriptions and struggles for discursive power influenced the on surface ‘pure’ language discussion, which was typically conducted at the time in the medium of journal contributions.

Sochi NARAOKA (Kyoto University)

The Nanjing Incident of 1913: Public Opinion and the Origins of the Sino-Japanese Conflict

This incident, which caused three casualties among the Japanese, occurred amid disorders in China after the Second Revolution. Japanese newspapers sensationalized the incident, whipping up a crowd of 30,000 demonstrators in Tokyo. They demanded that China apologize and pay compensation, and even argued that the Japanese government should intervene by force. Criticism of the Japanese government was so fierce that it resulted in the assassination of a high ranking official of the Foreign Ministry, seen as a promoter of ‘soft diplomacy.’ Under pressure from public opinion, the Japanese government demanded an apology and compensation. The Yuan Shikai administration, wishing to avoid confrontation, accepted the demands. Although the incident was brought to a peaceful conclusion, it could have escalated if the governments of Japan and China had not adopted a restrained attitude. This paper clarifies how the incident unfolded from its outbreak to its solution. It examines the basic structure of the diplomatic relationship between the two countries, paying particular attention to the influence of public opinion in Japan. The 1913 incident can be regarded as an early example of a recurrent pattern in bilateral relations, in which popular insistence for a hardline response to Japan’s ‘China problem’ forced the Japanese government to execute hawkish policies.

Nan NI (SOAS)

Script Transmission on the Margins of China: Traces from Sogdian to Manchu

Originating in Sogdiana, the Sogdian language, carried by enterprising Sogdian merchants along the ancient Silk Road, has left an indelible mark on their journey towards the East, particularly in Turfan and Dunhuang, where the great majority of Sogdian manuscripts have been excavated. There are mainly four types of scripts employed in Sogdian texts found in China, among which the most widely used one is known as the Sogdian “National script.” This research aims to elucidate the after-life of the Sogdian script as it was borrowed by the Turks for writing Uyghur script and subsequently adapted for traditional Mongolian alphabet, culminating in its development into the writing system of Manchu. The essential aim is to analyse how the utilisation of the script in each language is closely tied to its historical use in other linguistic contexts, thereby elucidating the process of transmission from Sogdian script to the Manchu alphabet on the margins of China. In addition to a comprehensive palaeographical research, this paper explores the historical background of how these diverse cultures influenced and adapted their writing systems in response to one another and seeks to unveil the role of Chinese influence in this process of script transmission. This multifaceted approach combines palaeographical analysis with historical contextualisation, casting a nuanced light on the dynamic cultural interactions manifested through the script transmission from Sogdian to Manchu on the peripheries of China.

Luca Nigro (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)

Exporting the Revolution to the Intermediary Zone: Guoji Shudian and the Distribution of Maoist Propaganda Materials in Western Europe (1953-1966)

In December 1949, the establishment of Guoji Shudian, the state-owned book foreign trade organization of the PRC, addressed the need to introduce New China to the outside world. Commencing in 1953, Guoji Shudian’s export endeavors targeted the Anglophone world, through a distribution contract for Mao’s *Selected Works* with British publisher Lawrence & Wishart in London. This pivotal decision laid the foundation for a comprehensive strategy, fostering a broader international network for the distribution of translated Maoist propaganda materials in Western Europe. Crucial in this initiative were the Embassy of Bern and the bookstores Nouvelle and Rousseau in Geneva, Switzerland, establishing connections with counterparts in West-European countries and occasionally redirecting shipments globally. The escalating Sino-Soviet split heightened distribution activities, particularly impacting Maoist dissemination within the context of the Italian communist movement. Following conflicts between Mao and Togliatti, the Chinese felt the need to remind the Italians of the shared experience of resisting oppression, namely imperialism and social-imperialism. The entire dissemination network, encompassing translation activities in China, the lives of on-site foreign translators, material shipments, and bookstore distributions, underwent adaptations in response to the Sino-Soviet conflict, now collaborating with dissident groups rather than communist parties in Western Europe. This paper, drawing on primary sources from British, Swiss, and Italian archives, addresses the material history of the Maoist internationalist project built through a diverse transnational network engaged in disseminating propaganda during the Global Cold War in Western-Europe. The Italian case exemplifies the network’s adaptive capacity until the first tumultuous phases of the Cultural Revolution.

Nora Yitong QIU (University College London)

The Fall of Qing and the Rise of East Asia's Global Payments System 1870-1912

China's traditional banking system by the mid-19th century could not fulfill the acute need for financial resources to finance China's fiscal and technological modernization. The Qing government realized the importance of establishing a modern central bank and a European style banking industry. They tried to achieve their goal by founding central and provincial joint stock limited banks, half-owned by the state and half-owned by the merchants. However, all of these attempts failed. European banks won the trust of the market, became the dominant players, connecting China's market to global capital. Why did China's government failed to achieve their goal? What role did European banks play in helping China's government and merchants in conducting international business? This paper uses novel archive materials collected from HSBC, Beijing No.1 Historical Archives, Shanghai Municipal Archive, Tianjin Municipal Archive and Liaoning Provincial Archive to build a textual database on banking documents. The government memorials, newspapers, private letters and bank receipts show that the government's failure to set up a central bank had deep roots in the distrust developed between the merchant community and the government. Even the government itself used European banks to conduct international business, buying weapons and machinery. HSBC, Deutsch Asiatische Bank (德華銀行), and Chase Bank's dominance had strong correlation with their connections to the central government and their wide correspondent networks. Europe's colonization gave foreign banks protection from local violent insurgence, providing a safe haven for both the government and the capitalists.

Andrea Revelant (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

The Nanjing Incident of 1927: Competing Media Narratives on China

In 1927, when the Nationalist army captured Nanjing, assaults and looting against foreign residents caused an armed reaction of the British and American forces. So far, research on the incident has assessed its impact on Sino-Japanese relations by stressing two kinds of effects. The first one is the diplomatic pressure Japan and other foreign powers exerted on Chiang Kai-shek's faction in the Nationalist Party to have it break off its already shaky alliance with the communists. The second effect attributed to the incident is a surge of public criticism within Japan against Foreign Minister Shidehara, who was accused of negligence in the protection of nationals abroad. According to several studies, dissatisfaction for the outcome of Shidehara's policy raised expectations for a more assertive China policy under the next cabinet. This paper reconsiders the significance of the incident by investigating how the Japanese printed media reported the news and commented on them. The analysis covers a range of newspapers and magazines, selected as representative of different political positions and target readerships. Findings show that, rather than changing media narratives, the incident was used by writers in support of their already formed views on China and Japan's China policy. Compared to 1913, responses were more diversified. This reflects the complexity of public opinion in the interwar period. At the same time, however, the incident left on the Nationalist military a negative image that the advocates of a hardline policy would stress to justify later intervention of the Japanese army in China.

Jasper Roctus (Ghent University)

Wang Jingwei Strides the "Kingly Way": Sun Yat-sen's Pan-Asian Road to Kobe Narrated in "Natural Friends; Unnatural Enemies" (1941)

Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), who became the first provisional president of the Republic of China in 1912, was not selective in sieving foreign benefactors and supporters. Sun, as well as his ideologically diverse allies in Japan, were united through a shared admiration of pan-Asian ideals. Pan-Asian rhetoric was an integral part of Sun's language register when speaking to Asian (especially Japanese) audiences. In his final series of public speeches in Kobe, Japan, in November 1924, Sun celebrated the moral superiority of the "kingly way" (王道) of the East over the "hegemonic way" (霸道) of the West. Sun's rhetoric in Kobe, as well as prior pan-Asian rhetoric, would later provide useful legitimization for the Japanese puppet regime led by the conveyor of Sun's will, Wang Jingwei (1883–1944). Wang collaborator T'ang Leang-Li (1901–1970) compiled a selection of speeches in China and Japan: "Natural friends; Unnatural enemies: A Guide for China's Foreign Policy" (中日兩國為友是自然的為敵是不自然的: 中國外交政策之南針, 1941) to bolster Wang's claim that Sun would have endorsed his pro-Japanese regime. After providing a concise background to Sun's (pro-)Japanese overtures before 1912, this contribution examines Sun's "road to Kobe" through the discourse included in T'ang's compilation (1914–1924). The article elucidates the evolution of Sun's seemingly contradictory pan-Asian statements, and collates them with Wang's claim on his legacy.

Julia Schneider (University College Cork)

'Black' People, Slaves, and Race in Late Imperial Thinking

In the late nineteenth century, when Chinese political thinkers discussed the situation of the Qing empire, they observed what happened in other world regions, looking for inspirations and models. They were particularly interested in US American approaches to democracy, nationalism, and constitutionalism, but also discussed racial segregation and the status of slaves and 'black' Americans before and after the Civil War. In reflection of that, they applied slavery as a metaphor to conceptualise the situation of the Qing empire under imperialist suppression as well as the situation of the Chinese people under Manchu rulership. The main characteristic of American slavery was racism, and by the assumption of racially ingrained differences humans were categorized as superior or inferior. In the Chinese discourse, however, slavery was mainly used to refer to a lack of civil rights, and the concept seemed to have been understood detached from racism. Although thinkers referred to the status of black slaves, their conceptualisation was superficial and more related to Chinese concepts of *nu* 奴 (bondservant, slave. In my presentation, I discuss how late imperial thinkers like Yan Fu, Zou Rong, Liang Qichao, and Sun Yat-sen conceptualised US American slavery and racial segregation, and how they applied these concepts in the Chinese context. Why did they use the metaphor of slavery in the first place? What was their understanding of state-supported racism in the USA, and how did they view the settler-colonial plantation slavery practiced there compared to traditional Chinese forms of slave-serfdom?

Ziran TANG (SOAS)

Cultural Synthesis and Transmission: The Localization of Duan Gong Belief among the Weining Miao in Guizhou

The Weining Miao (a.k.a. Ahmao 阿卯 or Dahua Miao 大花苗 in northwestern Guizhou) have long been a focus of academic research. The primary reason of the academic attention has, over the past century, been the influence of the Christian missionaries from the West, who introduced a new education system and new inter-ethnic dynamics. Nonetheless, scholarly attention towards the indigenous original belief systems of the region has been comparatively sparse. This paper posits that in addition to the well-known Christian and Miao original belief groups, there is also the Duan Gong belief group with Han Chinese cultural connotations (Taoist elements) that is blurred under the Miao original belief group as part of a complex socio-religious synthesis. The Duan Gong belief originated in Sichuan and traversed through Yunnan, and was subsequently assimilated into the Weining Miao cultural framework, with the Yi people acting as intermediaries. This complex network of cultural exchanges and the localised manifestation of this belief, which is one main part of my doctoral research project, is evidenced by means of an analysis of the relevant literature and my own fieldwork data. In so doing, this study approaches this phenomenon from a perspective of historical anthropology, which not only discusses the understanding of the dynamic cultural and belief landscape of the Weining Miao, but also sheds light on the flexibility of cultural interaction and the absorbability and evolution of belief systems within this ethnic group. The Duan Gong belief group amongst the Weining Miao thus serves as an example for the wider discourse on the cultural and religious fluidity that characterises the ethnic group of South Western border region.

Jaruwan Teanmahasitad / CHEN Shuyun (SOAS)

Thailand-Born (South-Chinese) Émigré Children and Controlling National Identity in Chinese Language Textbooks

According to the nationalist Thaification project of 1932, the post-War Thai government wanted to control the identity of Chinese émigré children (the so-called *huayì* 華裔) by reducing the language intensity in the Chinese textbooks and by changing from storytelling to dialogue and from the modernity discourse as promoted by Sun Yat-sen to contemporary Thai culture. Our research analysed the elementary-level Chinese textbooks published by Shanghai Printing House in 1949 for teaching overseas Chinese students in the Nanyang region (Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Indonesia, Malacca, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Ipoh, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam) and the one published by Thailand's Ministry of Education in 1978 for Thailand-born (southern part of China) émigré children. Our research also shows how the government evaluated elements not covered in the Chinese textbook: being "good" Thai citizens, presenting the royal family of Thailand and the Thai monarchy, the significance of military service, and the introduction of Western culture were inserted. They replaced the older interpretation of modernity which had followed the Three People's Principles through the story of animals and natural personification. Girls and women portrayed in textbooks acting and wearing outer symbols of Thai national cultural heritage. The Chinese merchants' lives in the textbooks emphasised their parents' occupations, which suggested a focus on their future career paths. The newer version also used a less sophisticated level of language and more language exercises and dialogues. The design of language textbooks thus played a role in shaping national identity and the émigré children's career paths.

Emily Teo (University of Erfurt)

Encountering Qing China in European Museums, 1830-1860

How did nineteenth century Europeans encounter China? A number of individuals such as missionaries, diplomats and physicians embarked on voyages to China, settling in the port cities of Macao, Canton and Hong Kong. Many others encountered China in European museums and themed exhibitions. In the mid-nineteenth century, the European engagement with foreign cultures was in full swing. With the rise of ethnographic interest, attempts to create realistic, immersive experiences of foreign countries emerged. Chinese material culture and everyday life as documented in the latest travel accounts were carefully read and imitated by museum curators and exhibition organizers, who constructed exhibits which claimed to offer viewers an ‘authentic’ experience of China. Such exhibits were met with positive responses and strong viewership numbers. Using case studies from Germany and England, such as Gotha’s Chinese and Japanese Museum, the Chinese Collection at Hyde Park Corner, and the Chinese section at the Great Exhibition, this paper explores how European visitors to museums and exhibits, equipped with a collection catalogue in hand, would have experienced a miniature version of the Chinese empire by visiting these carefully curated spaces. Objects imported from China were used didactically to instruct viewers about the ‘authentic’ China, in displays that were imitated throughout European metropolises.

Peng TUNG (Sapienza University of Rome)

A Chinese Brushstroke at the Tuscany Court: Cosimo III de’ Medici and His Gateway to China

In the vibrant landscape of European courts forging connections with the East during the early modern period, this study probes the nuanced role of Cosimo III de’ Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, specifically delving into his intriguing relations with China. The focus is on a portrait of the contemporary Chinese Emperor Kangxi integrated into Cosimo III’s court by 1709, now housed at the Uffizi gallery, signifying a subtle yet compelling facet of Medici diplomacy. By the end of the seventeenth century, the European cultural elite had shaped their visual perception of Kangxi through semi-imaginary illustrations in Jesuit-authored encyclopedic texts. However, the Uffizi portrait surpasses these preconceptions, offering a richly detailed representation that challenges prevailing depictions. Employing iconological analysis, the research scrutinises how this ‘more real’ representation contributes to elevating Cosimo III within his global discourse. In the panorama of Cosimo III’s worldwide narrative, portraits of distinguished foreigners emerge as influential elements at his court, commissioned or collected through the services of Jesuits. Meanwhile, during interactions with China, these Jesuit figures also play key roles as agents facilitating and advising diplomatic connections. The circulation of the Uffizi portrait may prove that Cosimo III was consciously creating a gateway to China through the support of Jesuits, who potentially construct dialogues between the Medici and China, unveiling a hitherto obscured dimension of early modern diplomatic engagements.

Gregor Weimar (SOAS)

“They Are Wicked and Deceitful and Heretical” – The Yongzheng Emperor’s Commentary of 1724 to Kangxi’s View on Religion

The edict of the Yongzheng Emperor of 1724, titled “to expound on and distribute the message of the Sacred Edict,” forms a commentary to the *Sacred Edict* (聖諭廣訓) written in 1670 by the Kangxi Emperor, his father. This paper provides a translation and analysis of the Yongzheng’s commentary to the seventh article of Kangxi’s *Sacred Edict*, which has been translated by David Johnson (1985) as follows: “7. Extirpate strange principles, in order to exalt the correct doctrine”. In this statement the Yongzheng Emperor deals with several “teachings” (*tacihyan* 喇嘛教 / *jiao* 教) “from of old,” namely Laozi, Buddhism and Daoism. Several “teachings” are absent, e. g. the “Western Religion,” i.e. Catholicism, which had just been banished from being proselytised in China by the same emperor’s edict of 1724, but focuses on corrupt monks and religious leaders. In summary, Yongzheng’s view on religion was: Heresies (*xiejiao* 邪教) are destructive to society, since they delude the people into not obeying the old ways, leading them into disobedience. The people should follow the “righteous teaching,” passed down through history by the combined sages. By commenting in this way on his father’s statement, Yongzheng makes clear that the ruler has a duty to manage moral “teachings,” since he has the obligation to protect its people ideologically and educate them, as well as to feed them, and protect them by military means. “Religion” was seen as a means to keep the people, society and the cosmic order stable, i.e. serve the maintenance of the Qing nation. Dogmatic content was very much secondary.

Shuping WU (Kyoto University)

The Policy Opinion of Railway Development of Sun Yat-sen in the Context of His Pan-Asianism Thought After the Foundation of the Republic of China

My research is focus on the policy opinion on railway development of Sun Yat-sen, one of the founders of Republic of China. In the Xinhai revolution, Yuan Shikai finally got the position of the provisional president of the new republic, as which Sun was elected. After that Sun contribute himself to infrastructure development of China. He was appointed general supervisor of all railways in China by Yuan, and established China Railway Corporation later. But at that time the capital development and rail industry in China was in its infancy. To make Sun’s railroad dream come true, it’s a great approach to introduce foreign capitals and technologies. However, it was a sensitive issue in China—because there’s a risk of foreign interference, which Chinese people strongly dislike. The result was that Sun traveled around China to give presentations to people, propagating his advocacy that for her own development, China should accept more foreign capitals and technologies. In the same time, Japanese entrepreneurs were seeking a way to get more natural resources and good market. Obviously China was a great target to Japan. Finally, as an Asian country that successfully established sufficient rail industry, Japan became an important potential partner of Sun. He visited Japan in 1913 to make an inspection of the railway system and finally established a company with Shibusawa Eiichi, a famous Japanese entrepreneur, to introduce capitals and technologies of Japan to China—the China Exploitation Company.

WU Ziqi (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, EHESS)

Henri Imbert, an Amateur Sinologist in the Colonial Margin of Guangzhouwan (1910–1925)

The French colonial governance in the leased territory of Guangzhouwan began in 1900 with very limited local knowledge. The administration was thus never able to develop fully its relations with the local Chinese society. Henri Imbert, born in 1870 in Saint-Étienne, an amateur sinologist who worked in a local government school, was eager to engage with the French intellectual communities in Hanoi and Beijing. Our definition of “amateur” is because of his incapacity of obtaining academic resources and the marginal situation of the leased territory. A series of articles he wrote were published in the *Revue Indochinoise* and in *Politique de Pékin*, some of them being later edited in book format. His research on Chinese botany, zoology, and classical literature highlights the multiple curiosities of a colonist. However, in the view of the French professional academic sinologists of the times, especially at *École française d’Extrême-Orient*, his research work was not considered satisfactory from a scientific standpoint. Thus, it never partook in the academic circulation of sinological knowledge. In order to overcome the geopolitical isolation and constant difficulties met by French colonists in Guangzhouwan during the Republican era, Henri Imbert sought to build connections with French scholars and publishers, but the destiny of Guangzhouwan still remained unclear at the time of his departure in 1925. As much as it can help shed light on the daily realities of colonial life in such a pluricultural context as Guangzhouwan in the early decades of the 20th century, Imbert’s agency also reflects his unsuccessful attempt to enhance the level of French colonial governance locally as well as to promote his own sinological research from an unnoticed corner of China.

Qiujun YAN (National Institute of Technology, Sendai College)

The Acceptance of Western Civilization by Japanese Sinologists in the Early Meiji Period: Understanding of Railways by Japanese Sinologists

This paper explains the policy on railway development of Sun Yat-sen, one of the key founders of the Republic of China. After the Xinhai revolution, Yuan Shikai became the provisional president of the new republic, to which Sun was elected. After that Sun dedicated himself to the development infrastructure in China. Yuan appointed Sun as general supervisor of all railways in China. At this time the development of capital and rail industry in China was still in its infancy but Sun successfully established the China Railway Corporation. To make Sun's railroad dream come true, he proposed to inject foreign capital and technology into the new Republic. However, this was a sensitive issue in China—the strong risk of foreign assistance quickly becoming foreign interference, was something the general Chinese population were wary of. To ease fears, Sun travelled around China giving presentations to people, propagating his advocacy; that for its own development, China must accept more foreign capital and technology. At the same time, Japanese entrepreneurs were seeking ways to get access to more natural resources and foreign markets, with China as the obvious target. For Sun, Japan, a fellow Asian country, was an important potential partner and in 1913 he visited Japan to inspect the country's railway system. This paper will trace how, after a difficult balancing act of measuring Chinese public opinion and Japanese intent, Sun established a company in conjunction Shibusawa Eiichi, a Japanese entrepreneur, to introduce Japanese capital and technology to China – the China Exploitation Company.

Gong ZHANG (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, EHESS)

Sinologist Diplomats and Power Relations in the French Foreign Office During the Late 19th Century

Since the signing of the Huangpu Treaty between China and France in 1844, the positions of the French diplomatic mission in China were initially filled by regular diplomats. However, starting from the mid to late 19th century, these positions were mostly taken over by young translators stationed in China, who were also predominantly amateur sinologists. This shift gradually gave rise to a relatively independent and closed “sinologist circle” within the French diplomatic mission personnel in China. Previous studies have posited that these young translators, who underwent language training and possessed a good understanding of Chinese customs and civilization, were selected in large numbers to serve as diplomats and consuls to facilitate communication with China, in response to the needs of diplomatic affairs. Our study adopts a prosopographical perspective to examine the group of diplomatic officials stationed in China, aiming to explain the formation of the “sinologist circle” through its close relationship with the network of diplomatic officials as well as under the direct influence of France's domestic political context. The affairs related to China within the French diplomatic system were manipulated by various factions with divergent positions, leading to a highly politicized approach to the type of relationship to be enacted with the late Qing empire. Within the French diplomatic personnel in China, periodic purges occurred, various political forces needed to establish agents in China, and officials advocated for the establishment or abolition of certain positions for political reasons. These factors collectively contributed to the phenomenon of many translators and amateur sinologists assuming diplomatic positions.

Yating ZHANG (Free University of Berlin)

West German Travellers in China: The Construction of China's Image and Sino-German Relations in the Mao Era

In the mid-1950s, the People's Republic of China (PRC) aimed to expand its trade relationships with Europe and Japan to undermine the Western embargo and reduce reliance on the Soviet Union. Despite facing the embargo against China after the Korean War and the regulatory strictures of the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Exports Controls (CoCom), both China and West Germany tried to pursue the establishment of new commercial connections. Notably, the visit led by Otto Wolf von Amerongen, Chairman of the East Committee, marked a pivotal juncture in 1957. Subsequently, China and West Germany issued a civilian trade agreement, increasing Sino-German trade and broadening the possibility for bilateral engagement. After 1957, more West Germans had opportunities to visit China. These travelers comprised journalists, economic experts, and high-hierarchy politicians. Arranged by the Chinese government, they went sightseeing in cities like Beijing and Shanghai, visited Chinese industries and educational institutions, and even engaged in dialogues with the CCP leaders. They conveyed their experiences within the PRC through articles and photography. Drawing mainly from German published sources and archives from German Foreign Minister Archives, this article will present how China in the Mao era demonstrated the achievements of socialist state-building by receiving guests from abroad and how West German visitors constructed an image of China from an outsider's perspective. Additionally, it will discuss the influence exerted on German policy towards China through the insights garnered from these travelers' excursions and the relations between China and West Germany in the Mao era.

Hao ZHU (Ghent University)

From Discourse to Action: Asianist Pursuits in Late Qing China – Tang Caichang and the 1900 Loyalist Movement

From the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898 戊戌變法 to the Loyalist Movement in 1900 庚子勤王, a pivotal era unfolded in China's modernization journey. Faced with setbacks from the Wuxu Coup 戊戌政變, reformists, led by Tang Caichang 唐才常, transitioned towards revolutionary efforts, initiating the Self-Reliance Army uprising 自立軍起義 to depose Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧 and establish a constitutional monarchy under Emperor Guangxu 光緒. Within this transformative period, Asianist ideology evolved from discourse to practical politics. This study focuses on Tang Caichang's 1898-1900 activities, examining how Asianism became a strategic tool for reformists and the Asian Association's role in transnational social networks during reform and revolution. Prior to the Wuxu Coup, Tang had actively engaged in the Asian Association, aligning Chinese reform aspirations with a Sino-Japanese alliance. After the Wuxu Coup, Tang Caichang and other reformists, along with revolutionary factions, members of grassroots organizations, and East Asia Common Culture Society 東亞同文會, organized the Self-Reliance Army uprising. Following the failure of Tang Caichang's uprising, the East Asia Common Culture Society demonstrated a refusal to cooperate with the Chinese reformists. The Asianism ideology of the Sino-Japanese Alliance collapsed. This study posits that Asianism in late Qing China is intricately interwoven with modern reform and revolutionary activities. Asianism provides a thought pathway for China's modern nation-state development and organizationally serves as a crucial channel for collaboration between China and Japan.



RELIGION

RELIGION

Friederike Assandri (Leipzig University)

Cheng Xuanying's Daode jing yishu and Chang'an Daoism

Cheng Xuanying is a major representative of Daoist *chongxuan xue* (Twofold Mystery teachings), a Daoist teaching popular in the late 6th and 7th century. *Chongxuan xue* has received attention in scholarly circles mainly because it integrates Buddhist Madhyamika-style tetra lemma logic into the commentarial reading of Daoist texts like the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. In a perspective of the study of philosophy, it is therefore interesting as a form of Daoist reception of philosophical thought from Buddhism. This talk will introduce Cheng Xuanying's *Expository Commentary to the Daodejing* in its specific localization in Chang'an. I will discuss the situation of Daoism in Chang'an at the turn of the 7th century, and will point out how Cheng Xuanying's *Expository Commentary* addresses issues that were specific to Chang'an Daoism. My approach aims at showing the close relation between local context and the development of Daoist philosophy on the one hand, and on the other hand it aims to underscore the fact that even with abstract teachings that claim universal truths, and with the establishment of Daoism as the first teaching of the newly established Tang state, which led eventually also to a network of imperially sponsored Daoist temples in all prefectures (Timothy H. Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang*. London: Wellsweep, 1996: 39), this Daoism was a "local" Daoism, developed under the particular conditions in Chang'an.

Desmond CHEUNG (SOAS)

City Gods in Ming China

This paper addresses one of the most prominent gods in the divine bureaucracy of traditional China: the city god, or *chenghuang* ("god of walls and moats"). Scholars have examined the medieval origins and evolution of the city god, but less attention has been paid to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) context in which the god became a central figure in the official ritual system, the *sidian* ("sacrificial statutes"). This system determined the hierarchy of spirits to whom the emperor and his officials offered sacrifices, which in turn reinforced the authority of the state. But the ritual system alone does not explain the city god's eventual prominence; the spirit's power was affirmed because the people acknowledged and sought help from it. Accordingly, this paper also examines Ming scholars' views on the origins and nature of the city god. Furthermore, by analyzing historical and fictional accounts of Zhou Xin, who became Hangzhou's city god in the early Ming period, this paper will demonstrate that the deity's broad appeal among the city's people was due to his reputation as an upright official who promoted their welfare and administered justice on their behalf. Therefore, the city god cult may be viewed as a site in which the interests of central state and local society interacted to establish the power of a god that served both.

Antonio De Caro (University of Zurich)

Circulating Beauty and Faith: The Distribution and Reception of Sino-Catholic Art between Europe and China

Within the corridors of the Diocesan Archives of Macau, a magnificent oil painting on canvas, most likely created by a Chinese artist between the 16th and 17th centuries, depicts the poignant event of Christ's deposition. Christ's countenance has unmistakable Chinese characteristics, placing him at the center of the composition. The upper left side features an ethereal background, giving the tableau a surreal and oneiric feel. As European Catholic missionaries ventured into the Ming empire, several European-produced artworks depicting Catholic themes made their way to China. Locally produced artworks, which frequently featured Catholic characters, were not simple copies of their European equivalents. Instead, they were created in situ by local artists as unique Catholic artifacts. This phenomenon showed the complex artistic interactions between the Sino-European domains, highlighting the formation of a thriving Sino-Catholic art heritage. By the nineteenth century, Chinese missionary-artists in present-day Shanghai, such as Liu Dezhai 劉德齋 (1843–1912), had assumed the mantle, actively contributing to the continued production of Sino-Catholic art. Their crafts, which included paintings, statuettes, and other devotional objects, went beyond their original religious intent. Notably, these material artifacts began to spread beyond local devotional places and into the global art market. This study attempts to delve into the intricate tapestry of the dissemination and reception of Sino-Catholic art from the early modern to the modern era. It seeks to appreciate the *longue durée* popularity of Chinese Catholic art through a series of case studies, examining its reception on both local and global scales. Finally, this investigation aims to highlight the cultural relevance of Sino-European exchanges in determining the course of Sino-Catholic artistic expression.

Raissa De Gruttola (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Franciscan Missionaries in China: Writing, Translating and Disseminating Christian Culture

Missionaries of the religious Order established by Saint Francis were the first to reach China since medieval times. While the first Franciscans who arrived in China left letters and travel accounts documenting what they saw and experienced in East Asia for European audiences, the missionaries who arrived in the subsequent centuries dedicated themselves to disseminating Christian teachings to the Chinese people. From the seventeenth to the twentieth century, Franciscan missionaries in China wrote or translated many texts of different types and on different topics, including catechisms, books of prayers, periodicals, and biblical texts. This paper will explore the variety of texts authored or translated by Franciscans in China over the centuries. Focusing on some periodicals and biblical translations with commentaries, the study will outline how some Christian cultural features were presented to the Chinese.

Sebastian Eicher (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Tracing Cicero's Path to China: The Endeavors of Catholic and Protestant Missionaries to Introduce a Roman Thinker to Chinese Literati

As Christianity and its accompanying Western intellectual traditions made their way to China, the figure of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE) emerged as a recurring element. A close examination of the surviving depictions of the renowned Roman orator and philosopher reveals that Catholic and Protestant missionaries chose to present him in very different ways. These variances in the representation of the thinker offer valuable insights into the missionaries' strategies for introducing Western concepts to Chinese audiences. Rather than presenting a comprehensive picture of the historical Cicero, the missionaries selectively emphasized aspects of his life and work that they felt resonated with Chinese cultural sensibilities. This paper will delve into the various representations of Cicero, exploring how these portrayals served as a vehicle for introducing Christian culture to the Chinese context.

Ann Heirman (Ghent University)

Ants in Vinaya Texts: Between India and China

Buddhist texts generally prohibit the killing or harming of sentient beings. This is certainly the case in vinaya (disciplinary) texts, which contain strict guidelines on the preservation of all animal life. When these texts were translated into Chinese, they formed the core of Buddhist behavioural codes, and medieval Chinese vinaya masters, such as Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), wrote extensive commentaries on them, introducing Indian concepts into the Chinese environment. But do these authors have anything to say about tiny creatures that are highly visible yet often neglected: ants? Humans tend to consider ants as unwelcome pests, and as such frequently try to eliminate them. Yet, they are undoubtedly sentient beings that – according to Buddhist principles – should not be harmed or killed. In that sense, their actions affect human activities, pushing people to react. This paper explores what this complex relationship between ants and humanity implies for Buddhist monastics. First, it examines the Indian vinayas' guidance on the subject of these crawling insects. In which contexts do they appear, and how do monastics perceive them? Second, it investigates how Chinese masters interpreted the guidelines contained within the Indian texts. How do they suggest devout Buddhists should deal with ants? How do they translate the Indian concepts, both linguistically and culturally, for their Chinese audiences? And how do they try to respect Buddhism's basic principles they hold in the highest esteem?

Mariia Lepneva (Ghent University)

The Dynamics of Chinese Buddhism During the Ming and Qing: Social Network Analysis Based on a Combined Dataset

This paper addresses the revival of Chinese Buddhism during the late Ming and early Qing with the use of social network analysis. It introduces an innovative approach for a partial use of the large-scale dataset “Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism,” which makes the research technically more feasible and creates new data for inclusion in the dataset. A portion of the data related to the historical period in question is extracted from the original dataset and combined with the new data gathered by the author from primary sources. Focusing on the problem of the periodization of the Buddhist revival, this research analyzes the differences that emerged in the graph with the introduction of the additional data as compared to Marcus Bingenheimer’s earlier take on this topic. The results for the first stage of Buddhist revival corroborate a recent scholarly suggestion that the rise of vibrancy in the Buddhist community might have started around the middle rather than the late sixteenth century. The layout for the second stage remains largely the same, as the additional data hardly touched upon the Chan lineages that dominated the seventeenth century. Finally, my network supports the neglected idea expressed in Japanese scholarship that the vibrancy of Chinese Buddhism did not fade away by the end of the seventeenth century but rather continued until the end of the eighteenth century. The conclusion of the paper introduces primary sources and directions for further research that can be pursued with the use of the innovative methodology suggested here.

Shuyang LI (Yale University)

The Inserted Idea of shen 神 as “The Transmigration Entity in the Saṃsāra” in the T6 Ban Nihuan Jing [般泥洹經 Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra]: The Comparison of T5 and T6 in Taishō Canon

This study explores the distinctive concept of “shen” (神 in Chinese Buddhism and its influence on the understanding of Saṃsāra. Defined by Jungnok Park as the “permanent agent of perception in Saṃsāra,” this concept deviates from the traditional Buddhist understanding of Anātman and emerged during the archaic translation period (from the mid-second century to 375) in China. The research primarily analyzes and compares two Chinese translations of the Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra: the original text *Fo bonihuan/banniepan jing* (佛般泥洹經, T5) and its revised version *Bonihuan jing* (般泥洹經, T6. Recent scholarly works have attributed the latter edition to Zhiqian (ca. 300 CE). Through a comparative analysis of these two editions, this paper reveals the systematic modifications made in T6 to the definition of Saṃsāra and uncovers the editors’ contributions to the development of the concept of “shen.” The study finds that early translators cautiously employed “shen” to convey different meanings, which eventually evolved into the widely accepted concept of a “permanent agent.” The paper makes the case that using “shen” as the “transmigration entity” on purpose in T6 may have been a strategy to persuade the audience to accept the concept of Saṃsāra, rather than merely a gradual emergence in Buddhist texts. This reflects the indigenization of the idea of Saṃsāra, combining the original doctrine with Chinese understandings of a permanent self. By examining the use of “shen” and “hunshen” (魂神 in T5 and T6, this research not only demonstrates the evolution of Chinese Buddhist thought but also provides new perspectives on understanding the early transmission and adaptation of Buddhism in China.

Yanxi LUO (University of Edinburgh)

Echoing Daoist Sagehood through Practices: Making Transcendents as Perfected Beings in the Baopuzi Neipian

This paper investigates potential connections between early Daoist texts and medieval Daoist traditions by examining the conditions, functions, and desired outcomes of various techniques for bodily perfection as a collective genre. The focus is on Ge Hong’s (283-343 Inner Chapters of the *Baopuzi* – a religious text centred on the beliefs and practices of Dao in the early fourth century. This paper first scrutinises the definitions of perfected beings, i.e., transcendents, in the *Baopuzi*. It subsequently categorises the primary functions of techniques leading practitioners toward perfection. Through alchemy, talismans, meditation, and other practices, practitioners can attain a perfected physical body, foresee the future, avert evil, and communicate with the supernatural world, similar to the abilities of ancient sages. The third section contextualises the overlapped functions of these techniques within early Daoist texts, examining how these sagacious abilities were expressed and valued in works such as the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Huainanzi*. This paper argues that Ge Hong’s portrayal of transcendents as Daoist perfected beings was integral to the redefinition of the concept of *dao* within a broader intellectual and religious context in early medieval China. It also provides a new perspective on understanding Daoist texts like the *Baopuzi* that straddle the categories of “philosophical” and “religious.” The techniques presented in the text should be considered as the key linking these two facets.

Arianna Magnani (University of Enna “Kore”)

Aftermath of Divergent Religious Translation: The Taiping Rebellion from the Perspective of Propaganda Fide

Missionary work and religious translation involve cross-cultural communication, sometimes giving rise to theological issues, syncretism, and in other cases, new creations or heterodox interpretations. The well-known case of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement (太平天国运动 in the Late Qing China embodies all of these situations. It is widely acknowledged that the translation of the Bible made by the Protestant Robert Morrison inspired Liang Fa 梁发 to compose his “Good Words to Admonish the Age” 《劝世良言》 which, along with the new translation led by the Lutheran missionary Karl Gützlaff, served as the foundation for Hong Xiuquan’s 洪秀全 own and divergent understanding of the Bible and Christian concepts. However, how were the results of this reinterpretation perceived by the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (Propaganda Fide), which was responsible for overseas missions and overseeing the dissemination of the Catholic faith worldwide? This paper examines the impact of the Taiping’s reinterpretation through an analysis of the documentation in the Propaganda Fide Archives. It explores how the Taiping Rebellion was depicted in reports sent from China to Rome, encompassing letters accompanied by various documentary testimonies, including texts published by the rebels themselves.

Marc Nuernberger (University of Munich)

Temporarily Hidden, Temporarily Unknown? Some Observations on Invisibilities in the Realm of the Huayan Sutra

The special relation of religion toward the invisible has ever since troubled religious seekers and phenomenologists alike. The threshold between the sacred and the profane, as well as the spiritual and the material seems to be hard to cross – either way. While the struggles in the realms of the Abrahamic religions are well documented, the proposed presentation will focus on pictorial strategies of Chinese Buddhism, specifically the Huayan Sutra. Our theoretical starting point will be the so-called “three-body” doctrine of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, i.e., the union of the “transformation body,” the “reward body,” and the “dharma body” – the Buddha’s eternal, indestructible, and all-pervasive thusness. After an illustration of the visual challenges this “trinity” poses, we will turn toward Sudhana’s pilgrimage at the end of the Huayan Sutra. Taking the main sutra as a visual exercise in face of the apparent invisibility of the buddha lands revealed by the eye of Buddha, we will present Sudhana’s entry into the inconceivable as a gradual re-formulation of this endeavor. While a soteriological contextualization of the various “invisibilities” of the sutra will help to uncover the inherent temporal structures – and our general assumptions regarding hidden or unknown objects of knowledge –, a final discussion of selected illustrations of the sutra will hopefully be an invitation to rethink the question of “mediations” of invisible things beyond the context of Chinese Buddhism.

Maurizio Paolillo (University of Naples “L’Orientale”)

The Old Man Star (Canopus) in Daoist sources

Shouxing 壽星 (the Star of Longevity, deification of the star known in the West as Canopus; at least by the Han known as Laoren xing 老人星, the Old Man Star has been a widespread deity in Chinese popular iconography since the Ming period. In the framework of a wider comparative research on the symbolism of Canopus in ancient China as well in other cultural areas of Eurasia, the contribution aims to show the references to Canopus in Daoist sources, starting from his presence (with the epithet *Nanji laoren*, “Old Man of the Southern Culmen” in the *Laozi zhongjing* (2nd-3rd century). Particular attention will be paid to a legendary narrative in the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉訣妙經, a text belonging to the Lingbao tradition (5th century), and to some variants of it, attested in the *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (11th century): the *Nanji zunshen ji* 南極尊神紀 and the *Chiming tiandi ji* 赤明天帝紀. Here the presence of toponyms and the names of the protagonists themselves seem to present references to the Indian world (in which Canopus plays a very important role) and perhaps also to the Hellenistic world.

Massimiliano Portoghese (Ghent University)

Why do Śramaṇas Take the Tonsure? Perceptions and Symbolism of the Shaven Head in Ancient and Early Medieval China

From antiquity up to the present day, the shaven head represents one of the most iconic identity markers of the Buddhist monastic community across the globe. In early medieval Chinese Buddhist texts, the intentional removal of facial hair symbolized the rejection of any aesthetic adornments associated with an attractive appearance. Additionally, the shaven head expressed a specific religious identity, setting Buddhist monastics apart from broader societal norms. Despite representing a fundamental ritual of passage, the act of taking the tonsure faced severe criticism from the very advent of Buddhism in China. In the Six Dynasties period (220-598 C.E., some conservative factions in society promoted anticlerical attacks on the Buddhist monastic community, encompassing reprimands on etiquette and social behavior. Cutting the hair was regarded as an unfilial act, as it deviated from the ritual tradition of preserving the body. However, was it only an ethical issue? As the semantic of gestures altered as a consequence of contextual mutations, the question of how a shaved head was perceived in China before and after the arrival of Buddhism arises naturally. To address this inquiry, the present contribution analyzes discussions found in the oldest extant Buddhist apologetic collection, the *Hongming Ji*, as well as indigenous pre-Buddhist texts. The research aims to explore the social perceptions of this specific body modification by addressing questions such as why secular critics focused on this particular custom over others and whether hair held special relevance in the ancient Chinese ritual context.

Anna Sokolova (Ghent University)

Invoking Deities for the Deceased: Integration of Buddhist Rituals into Mortuary Practises in Medieval China

This paper focuses on ritual systems that developed in China over the medieval period (between the 6th and the 13th centuries) with a focus on mortuary practises. Thousands of tombs dating to the medieval period have been excavated in China over the last century. Archaeological materials retrieved from medieval burial sites, corroborated by evidence from their contemporaneous liturgical manuals, disclose ubiquitous presence of Buddhist ritual objects and decorative elements across diverse local settings. This attests to a widespread integration of Buddhist rituals into burrial practices that were standardised by the Tang imperial court in the middle eighth century. By collecting, comparing, and juxtaposing archaeological data with their contemporaneous canonical manuals, epigraphy, and liturgical manuals, this paper will test sustainability of major mortuary ritual patterns across broad regional landscape in the context of a wholesale spread of Buddhist rituals and discourses in medieval China. As a part of this process, this paper seeks to trace the recitation of spells (*dhāraṇī*) as a common element of burial procedures in the context of the institutionalization of Esoteric rituals among imperial elites, as well as to trace the application of Buddhist maṇḍalas to burials in respond to the spread in medieval China of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, a yoga tantra that had shaped the basis for the funerary practices in multiple Buddhist cultures across the Silk Road.

Mengyuan TIAN (University of Cambridge)

Online Ceremonies of Yellow Emperor Worship in the Digital Age: Live Broadcasting, Virtual Platforms, and the Digitization of Religious Practices

This paper provides a fresh perspective on religious practices in contemporary China with its focus on online worship ceremonies during the pandemic period (2019–present) and the changing religious routines embodied in the politics of culture and morality in the digital era. Due to the restrictions posed after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the access to religious or ritual institutions, including Yellow Emperor temples, ancestral halls, or official worship ceremonies, was restricted, and online ceremonies became the substitute at individual, community, and national levels. This paper aims to address the question of how the local state responds to and manages the needs and conduct of religious practice inside and outside the local community, regarding tourism attraction management, online worship ceremony service, and live broadcast organisation. The research identifies three distinct electronic phases in the evolution of Yellow Emperor’s rituals. The first phase, predominantly in the 1990s, involved video uploading and global live broadcasting, with an emphasis on replicating content from physical platforms to virtual web platforms. The second phase, mainly since the 2000s, introduced online ancestor worship, facilitating interactive engagement through platforms like WeChat. This phase expanded the range of ritual content available on virtual platforms, allowing for online prayers, cultural exploration, and activities such as online lottery draws. The third phase, described as “meta-universe development,” is still emerging in the 2020s, exemplified by the online meta-universe worship platform in Zhejiang Province’s Jinyun. This study is significant in that it expands upon previous research on the digitization and video adaptation of religion in the electronic information age. Based on the vast amount of data available in the era of the pandemic, this study provides a deeper representation of how religious life on electronic platforms can substitute for real-life religious activities. It further explores the effectiveness and limitations of such a replacement.

WANG Peiwei (Wuhan University)

Sex and Sexuality in Daoism: Rethinking Shangqing huangshu guodu yi (DZ 1294) and Early Celestial Masters

This paper explores the nuanced landscape of sexuality within Daoism, focusing on the DZ 1294 *Shangqing huangshu guodu yi* “Ritual of Passage of the Yellow Book” (GDY). Traditionally, studies on this text have led to certain assumptions: a) a clear distinction between non-Daoist *fangzhong* (sexual techniques in bedchambers) and Daoist *heqi/huangchi* (merging pneuma), b) the association of *heqi* practice in GDY with early Celestial Masters, and c) a three-participant hypothesis that weaves into interpretations on publicising sex and community building. This paper critically reexamines these views, and challenges their validity. I will argue that both *fangzhong* and *heqi* are undoubtedly Daoist, as affirmed by canonical Daoist authors. The *heqi* ritual is likely to only emerge during the Six Dynasties period, and the received *Xiang'er zhu* shows no traces of it. Analysis of the GDY suggests that is is a two-participant ritual with no third party present. The initiation of the Register of One Hundred and Fifty Generals, an event frequently associated with the GDY, appears unrelated. If the rite is indeed sexual, it seems to only depict the scenario of a female master and her male disciple. Additionally, further interrogation of “sexual” metaphors in the GDY reveals substantial links with the Shangqing school and actually points towards non-sexual interpretations. This reevaluation prompts a reconsideration of established perspectives on sexuality within Daoism and calls for more nuanced interpretations of the GDY.

Junfu WONG (University of Cambridge)

Practising Ritual: A Functional Reexamination of Patronage Registers on Guanzhong Stone Stelae in the Premodern Period

During the late fifth and sixth centuries, lay believers from diverse cultural backgrounds formed religious associations characterised by the erection of votive stone stelae. Notably, these stone stelae contained a fruitful epigraphic corpus of patronage registers listing the names and titles of the patrons. Former scholars have primarily analysed these patronage registers from a textual standpoint, treating them simply as compilations of names. Nevertheless, this research seeks to demonstrate how a visual reexamination of these patronage registers can enrich our understanding of the rituals practised by lay believers. Its first part involves a comprehensive examination of the titles held by the patrons, aiming to discern their specific responsibilities in communal activities. Subsequently, it delves deeper into titles that appear to be closely linked to ritual performances. By drawing upon various scriptural and historical texts, this research sets the stage for uncovering the potential procedures and components involved in the rituals performed by the lay believers. Its second part sheds light on the ritual elements embedded in these patronage registers when viewed through a visual perspective. By arguing that these patronage registers can be perceived as visual chart displaying the ritual scene, this research proposes multiple interpretations of the possible functions of these lists of names, revealing their significance in understanding the religious beliefs and rituals of the lay believers during that historical period.

Tianjie YIN (EPHE, Paris)

Shifting Media: Explorations of Belief of Thunder God in Ming and Qing Dynasty Texts and Images

The Thunder God held a significant place in ancient Chinese beliefs and worship. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, this worship permeated popular society, manifesting in both texts and images. This study aims to utilize 700 Daoist liturgical paintings collected from Sichuan province as foundational resources to analyze the interplay between texts and images. The research will start by tracing the origins of Thunder God worship through its attributes. It will then explore the interaction between the Thunder God and its Tantric origins. Ultimately, the study will clarify the roles and significance of Thunder God Yin Jiao (殷郊) in Daoist liturgical paintings from the Qing Dynasty by thoroughly examining historical texts and other visual representations. The focus of this study will be twofold and focused on God Thunder Yin Jiao: delving vertically into “the historical context of Thunder God worship” and exploring horizontally “the materials related to shifting media about Thunder God worship.” By investigating the interaction between the Chinese Thunder God and its Tantric origins in popular images and texts of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, this study aims to deepen the understanding and faith in the Thunder God.

Jakub Zamorski (Jagellonian University)

What – If Anything – is Chinese “Pure Land School”?

In both popular and academic discussions of Chinese Buddhism it is still quite common to see references to the “Pure Land school,” or “jingtu zong” (淨土宗) in Chinese. At the same time, within the field of Buddhist studies, the notion of the Chinese “Pure Land School” has been critically scrutinized and, in some cases, rejected as anachronistic. Some (mostly Western) scholars have argued that in pre-modern China there was never a separate school that styled itself as the “Pure Land,” and that the now current concept of “jingtu zong” gained traction only in the 20th century, largely under the influence of Japanese-language Buddhist scholarship. In my presentation I would like to contribute to this debate by highlighting two relatively overlooked factors behind the emergence of the contemporary notion of “jingtu zong”: first, the “bottom-up” agency of Chinese Buddhists of the late Qing and early Republican period, who applied this term in a variety of non-academic contexts; second, the evolving representations of the Chinese Pure Land tradition in the works of Sinophone scholars, whose assumptions and considerations often differed from those of Western and Japanese academe. In the concluding remarks I would like to discuss some implications which Buddhological debates about the “Pure Land school” have for the broader community of Sinologists writing in Western languages.

Qijun ZHENG (EPHE, Paris)

Daoist Textual Innovation and the Resilience of Maoshan 茅山 Pilgrimage in Republican China

In early Republican China, socio-political turmoil and anti-superstition campaigns threatened popular religious practices, including widespread temple destruction. Remarkably, the Maoshan pilgrimage, centering on the cult of Three Mao Lords 三茅真君, not only survived but flourished, evolving into a major regional center for religious, economic, and cultural activities. This study investigates the resilience and transformation of the Maoshan pilgrimage, highlighting the crucial role of textual innovations in adapting the cult to the era's new religious landscape. Employing a multidisciplinary method combining textual, historical, and anthropological approaches, the paper presents a comprehensive case study on the adaptive strategies of the Maoshan Daoists. As a significant Daoist sacred mountain and pilgrimage site in the Jiangnan region with roots tracing back to the Han dynasty, Maoshan's resilience is exemplified in its textual traditions. The study examines various primary sources, including gazetteers edited by resident Daoists, precious scrolls 寶卷 and spirit-written scriptures and litanies. These textual innovations from the 1920s represent a common adaptation strategy across different religious identities. By analyzing the development and influence of key Daoist texts of the Republican era, including press articles and travelogues by Maoshan visitors, the study underscores how these texts, revered in ritual practices, dynamically responded to societal changes. It demonstrates their pivotal role in popularizing the cult, maintaining pilgrimage traditions, and ensuring the survival of Daoist institutions at Maoshan during a period of significant change.



LAW

Maria Kieslich (GvW Graf von Westphalen)

The Legal Framework of Chinese Associations

In present times, the registered associations (eingetragene Vereine under German law serve as an important vehicle to shape democracy and ensure social variety whereas the Chinese legislator aims to promote the construction of socialism through social corporations (社会团体. Influenced by the German civil law, the Chinese legislator recognized social corporations as legal persons in codified law for the first time in 1929. The General Part of the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China ("GPCL", which came into force in 2017 newly categorises all recognized legal persons and defines social corporations. Together with the Regulations on the Registration and Organisations of Social Corporations in its latest version from 2016 the provisions of the GPCL on social corporations form the legal basis of this legal institution. This paper aims to present the results of the analysis of the legal framework of social corporations under Chinese law with a legal comparative approach, which the candidate worked out in the course of her PhD. The analysis focuses, in particular, on the systematic incorporation and the establishment conditions, the internal organization and the administrative handling of social corporations under Chinese law compared to the respective German provisions on registered associations. The comparison is based on the historic, political and social backgrounds of both jurisdictions. Such analyses may serve as a basis for further Sino-German comparative studies, both, in legal and social science and contribute to broader research on the influence of social phenomena on legal development.

Agnes Schick-Chen (University of Vienna)

Writing Professional Intellectual Identities: 'Suibi' and the Informality of the Legal Field in China

When professional occupations were reestablished as constituents of social status in China in the reform period, informal essay writing became one of the discursive resources and narrative foundations of related processes. Individual reflections on theoretical issues and their practical implications represented collective experience of and approaches to new conceptualizations and actual perceptions of occupational realities. Expounding on prose writing by legal scholars and practitioners that were published as 'faxue suibi,' 'fazhi suibi,' 'faguan or lüshi suibi' and the like, the presentation shows how these texts contributed to discourses aiming beyond the institutional- and thereby unfolding an actors-related aspect of legal development in that period. It intends to exemplify how the narratives developed and shared within and without this discourse community indicate processes of identity formation informed by the expectations of an intellectual avant-garde and a new professional elite. It further claims that this specific form of both internal and external communication can be read as the informal layer of a legal field consolidating within China's socio-economic conditions, cultural spaces and political constraints in late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Anna Chiara Trapani (University of Naples "L'Orientale")

Unveiling Deceit: False Accusation in Late Imperial China - Moral, Legal, and Historical Perspectives

The study of legal historical records reveals factual details and firsthand accounts of crimes in late imperial China. In 1809, three homicides unfolded in Guangxi, Guangdong, and Guizhou provinces. The perpetrators, either willingly or externally influenced, compounded their guilt with the crime of false accusation. From bribery to violent incidents and family conspiracies, the verdicts interconnect diverse facets, underscoring the complexity of a crime considered legally minor but morally pernicious. Examining Chinese morality, accusing and subsequently convicting an innocent person had the potential to disrupt the social equilibrium and transgress the principle of justice to the extent of disturbing the balance of nature. If "the wise emperor rules his ministers and not the people" and the ministers are incapable of dispensing justice, it would be the emperor's governance scrutinized by heaven. The moral ramifications were directly tied to the norms of the codes and the law. To forestall the commission of the crime or the evasion of justice, exceedingly severe punishments, including lifelong exile or the death penalty, were mandated. Pivotal to the analysis of the legal perspective is the focus on laws and code articles related to the crime and its evolution over time. The examination of laws and their application in the end converges with the scrutiny of circumstances and judicial verdicts from original court cases of the Jiaqing era. This approach unites moral, legal, and historical dimensions, facilitating a thorough comprehension of the magnitude of the false accusation crime and its ramifications in late imperial Chinese society.



POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Konstantinas Andrijauskas and Raigirdas Boruta (Vilnius University)

Renewed Sino-Taiwanese Competition for Influence: The Case of Economic and Cultural Statecraft in Lithuania

Ever since its late-2020 decision to deepen non-official relations with Taiwan, the southernmost Baltic state of Lithuania has emerged at the forefront of the Sino-Taiwanese global competition for influence. While the 2021 opening of the boldly-named Taiwanese Representative Office in Vilnius marked the apex of the island's internationalisation efforts and the Sino-Lithuanian diplomatic tensions, including unprecedented economic coercion measures against the small state, it was often lost to the general public and even scholars that both China and Taiwan actively engaged in competitive economic and cultural activities in Lithuania immediately before, during and after the high point of the crisis in late 2021 and early 2022. Treating this competition for influence as a clear manifestation of foreign statecraft, defined as "the organised actions governments take to change the external environment in general or the policies and actions of other states in particular to achieve the objectives that have been set by policymakers" (Holsti 1976), the authors of this paper specifically focus on exploring those statecraft techniques that could be theoretically attributed to what international relations scholars perceive as its economic (Baldwin 1985) and cultural (Goddard and Nexon 2016) domains. The comparative analysis along case-specific and temporal dimensions will, therefore, reveal that aside of better known Chinese economic coercion measures used against Lithuania during the apex of the crisis, both China and Taiwan pursued broader economic incentive- and cultural attraction-based influence techniques that targeted such areas as high-tech, education, and sports, with the island actually being more effective in these endeavours.

Adrian Brona (Jagellonian University)

Educational Background of Subnational Elites in China – Differences Between Provinces, Autonomous Regions, and Municipalities

Over the past several decades, research on political elites in China has developed greatly. There are many qualitative and quantitative studies on members of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, to some extent, studies on subnational elites are limited. Provincial-level units, i.e., provinces (22), autonomous regions (5), and municipalities (4), play a crucial role in the governance of China. The main aim of the paper is to explore the educational background of members of CCP Provincial Committees in all 31 provincial-level units. It will answer a few research questions based on publicly available biographical data: how many cadres obtained a tertiary education? Where did they graduate in terms of both the institution of higher education and the place (city) of graduation? From what field of study did they obtain a degree? How many cadres studied at the CCP's Central Party School or provincial party schools? Do some of them have educational experience obtained abroad? The analysis will be conducted on three levels. First, among members of all committees, which will give a broad picture of the subnational political elites. Second, at the level of each provincial-level committee. It will distinguish local variations and compare results in different provincial-level units. Third, at a level of provincial party standing committees. These bodies group between 9 and 13 of the most essential members of provincial-level committees. Additionally, data collected for the 2016/2017 and 2021/2022 election seasons in provincial committees will reveal any educational preferences in recruiting members of provincial-level committees during Xi Jinping's administration.

Chun-chih CHANG (Xiamen University) and Chien-min CHAO (The Chinese Culture University)

Resurgence of a Corporate State in China: The Legislative Capacity Under Xi's Leadership

China's party-state structure has more control than average autocratic states and strengthening the power of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been a signature policy since Xi Jinping took power in 2012. Would the legislature gain ground as a result of the strong party leadership at the expense of its autonomy? If its capacity is indeed amplified to its power base? In order to answer these questions, the authors first create a data base relying on the data provided in the website of the National People's Congress (NPC). Information about 245 bills enacted between the 9th NPC (1998-2003) and the 12th NPC (2013-2018) have been gathered. This paper will calibrate the NPC's capacity based on its workload, legislative relevance, and ability to scrutinize legislation. The paper finds that although the workload has been declined the number of bills enacted by the NPC has been on the rise significantly. Furthermore, the duration for a bill to be passed has also been lengthened. This paper further finds that the increase of the legislative capacity has something to do with the gathering of opinions from the elites and aggregating social information. In other words, the legislative organ has been a tool for the CCP to gather and aggregate information from the society. The NPC actually plays a role of brokering between the party-state and the society. Ultimately, it is part of the transitional belt for the maintenance of political stability.

Julie Yu-Wen Chen (University of Helsinki)

Multiethnic Nation-Building in the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China since 1911

Although both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC, also known as Taiwan, as well as their ruling parties, have altered over time, there are quite a few similarities between their models of nation building, more than is commonly acknowledged. The *guofu* (father of the modern Chinese state, Sun Yat-sen, one of the few political leaders who is still honored on both sides of the Taiwan Straits, claimed all the peoples and territories of the former Qing empire comprised a single national community, the so-called Zhonghua minzu. Yet the Han supermajority has always sat at the center of this national imaginary. This paper asks what has happened to Sun's imagined community across the last century, and how it has evolved in the two Chinese states of the PRC and the ROC. It demonstrates the enduring challenge of Han centrism for nation-building in both entities, while also illustrating how recent changes in domestic and international policies in China and Taiwan is altering this national imaginary and the place of ethnocultural diversity within it.

Jens Damm (University of Tübingen)

Connecting Across the Strait: Analysing CCP and ROC Media Framings of Tainan-Xiamen Cultural Ties

This paper analyses mainstream media discourses in China and Taiwan regarding cultural diplomacy between the port cities of Tainan and Xiamen. Applying framing theory, I systematically examine three dominant discourses across Chinese and English language publications. First, I explore official Chinese media, including the Xiamen City news portal and Xiamen Daily, which reflect the CCP perspective. Second, I investigate the Taiwanese "green camp" discourse, analysing statements from the Tainan City Government and outlets like the Liberty Times that present the DPP viewpoint. Third, I delve into the Taiwanese "blue camp" discourse by looking at sources such as the United Daily News and official statements from blue parties like the KMT. I focus on Tainan and Xiamen because of their deep historical connections through figures like Zheng Chenggong and their shared Minnan heritage. In recent years, various cultural exchanges have taken place including Dragon Boat festivals, temple cooperation, and joint economic forums. Moreover, Xi Jinping spent his formative political years conducting united front work to build ties between China and Taiwan while serving in Fujian. Through a preliminary analysis, I have found competing interpretations characterised by underlying political differences. The CCP employs united front strategies to increase Taiwanese civil society ties with Xiamen, emphasising cultural similarities across the strait. The green camp discourse is highly critical of the CCP's united front motives. While embracing cross-strait cultural exchange, the blue camp discourse adheres more closely to ROC identity and shies away from fully accepting CCP narratives.

Benjamin Davies (Lund University)

CCP Propaganda Studies: Legacies, Challenges & Opportunities

How to navigate a field that might not exist? This is a question facing researchers of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda. Despite decades of work on the subject, and what feels like its ever-increasing relevance inside and outside academia, there has been no similarly prominent discussion of "CCP propaganda studies." Nonetheless, there are major trends and works we can follow – passing, on the way, paths untaken. This paper assesses the state of CCP propaganda studies through a long, deep analysis of the literature, stretching from the founding of the PRC to the present day; covering multiple types of sources from governmental work to academic; and highlighting cross-cultural comparison between Chinese and non-Chinese perspectives. Mapping the legacies of this literature shows us the challenges of studying CCP propaganda, but also the opportunities in what remains under-explored and in the potential of new sources and methods. I conclude that there are three major opportunities for the field. The first is to expand on analysis of the term propaganda (and related concepts as used in the PRC, informed by reference both to Chinese-language sources and propaganda studies as a broader field. The second is to focus more closely on the content of CCP propaganda in order to understand its trends. The third is to leverage the increasing presence of CCP propaganda online to gather, preserve and analyse it in effective, innovative and interesting ways.

Kikee Doma Bhutia (University of Tartu)

An Analysis of Border Conflict in the Himalayas Surrounding India & China from a Local Perspective

In recent decades, international border disputes have barred traders, pilgrims, and nomads from passing through Himalayan passes. Numerous state borders are marked by the 2,400 kilometers of the Himalayan range. In this culturally diverse and ecologically fragile region, large-scale transport, resource extraction, and tourism have been facilitated by the deployment of troops by numerous countries in an attempt to protect or project their claims. As a result of the interconnected projects of militarization, intense development, and construction of large hydropower projects, the small Himalayan states have undergone a variety of changes and transformations that are transforming the environment and contributing to the global warming at the world's most crucial node of hydrology, adding to the degradation of hydrology and the environment. Starting in Kashmir on the disputed Pakistan-India border, it extends southeast through the disputed China-India border, the disputed India-Nepal border, the resolved China-Nepal border, the disputed China-Bhutan border, and the Eastern section of the disputed China-India border. Thus, the region remains restive. This paper will consolidate smaller Himalayan states such as Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh as cultures and societies at fringes dealing with the growing tension between the Asian giants. It aims to delve into the deep connection between how the border issues and conflicts are often polarising and creates environmental destructions and concerns in the Himalayas.

Valeria Fappani (University of Trento) and Blanca Marabini San Martín (Madrid Autonomous University)

China's Drive for Global Greatness: Success and Security Concerns of the PRC's New Energy Vehicle Policies

Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) have been making headlines as a result of concerns derived from their widespread penetration of the European automobile market. Although it has caused wariness among some stakeholders, the Chinese EV boom can be interpreted as a success story stemming from strict economic planning. China has developed an extensive policy framework for the development of New Energy Vehicles (NEVs) and has carefully fostered the growth of this sector through ad-hoc plans since 2012. With the twin aims of alleviating dependency on foreign fossil fuel imports and reducing emissions and air pollution, it has managed to develop vehicles capable of dominating the global EV market, as exemplified by Chinese company BYD slowly taking over from Tesla as the dominant EV global producer. This paper aims to map out the Chinese path to success in the EV sector by dissecting the relevant policy, as well as evaluating the international response to the rise to dominance of Chinese EVs. After outlining China's New Energy Vehicles Policy, this paper will identify and evaluate EU and US policy responses to China's EV success, highlighting policy areas considered a security concern or that have elicited responses such as the US tariffs or the EU's anti-subsidy investigation. By chronicling Chinese EV development and EU and US policy responses, this paper seeks to provide a basis for continued discussion regarding the next steps of these three key players in the global decarbonization of transport.

Mike Gow (Edge Hill University)

Corporate Socialist Responsibility: The Legislative Reification of a Corporate State Apparatus in Xi Jinping's New Era

This article explores corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Xi Jinping's New Era (2012-present) and the institutionalisation of the Party-state's moral and ideological vision in relation to the private sector. Analysis of legislative, regulatory and policy documents reveals how the Party-state has sought to both constrain the private sector and mobilise it in service of state-building projects. Examples of recent CSR issues are also introduced to illustrate three key theoretical arguments emerging from the research which may inform our understanding of the role of the private sector in the mediation and negotiation of morality and ideology in Xi's New Era. Firstly, alongside the Althusserian realms of the repressive state apparatus (RSA) and the ideological state apparatus (ISA), an emergent third realm is theorised which we have termed the Corporate State Apparatus (CSA). Reified through the strategic implementation of legislation, regulation and policy, the CSA constitutes a restrictive and coercive institutional nexus in which corporate citizens are mobilised in service of the Party-state's morality and ideology campaigns. Secondly, CSR itself is transformed in the Chinese context due to the top-down formulation and legislative imposition of CSR by the Party-state. Legislation effectively elevates the Party-state above all other stakeholders whilst also inverting the prioritisation of four key components of conventional CSR strategy: the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities of companies. Finally, the CSE creates a form of consumerism which serves as an arena for the performative expression of national identity, values and citizenship consistent with the Party-state's morality and ideology.

Carolyn L. HSU (Colgate University) and Timothy Hildebrandt (LSE)

Lying Flat vs Developing Quality (Suzhi): Evidence of a Generation Gap from the Civic Participation in China Survey (CPCS)

For decades, the Chinese Communist Party has based its political legitimacy on the moral concept of *suzhi*, or quality, claiming that it deserves to rule because it provides its citizens with an ever-increasing quality of life. This includes economic growth, but also better conditions for citizens to develop themselves through education, science, and business so that they can become "high-quality" people. In practice, this has led to hypercompetitive environments in education, work, and consumerism. Recently, young people have pushed back against the pressure to "develop their quality" with social media trends such as "lying flat" (*tangping*), "garlic chives" (*jiucaai*), and "involution" (*neijuanhua*). But are these just buzzwords or is there a real generation gap in morality? This research offers evidence from the Civic Participation in China Survey (CPCS), a longitudinal, national survey, that young people are beginning to diverge from older generations in their ideas of what it means to be a good person. It compares data from two waves of the CPCS: Wave 1 which took place from December 2019 to February 2020 (4,999 valid responses), just as the pandemic was beginning, and Wave 2, which ran from December 2021-February 2022, well into the pandemic (5003 valid responses). This paper examines the sources of this generation gap, including the role of the pandemic, and discusses the potential implications for *suzhi* morality and CCP legitimacy if these trends continue.

Qionghui HUANG (Ghent University)

The Future of China's Military Presence in Djibouti: Implications for Overseas Intervention

This study examines China's military presence in Djibouti, evaluating its stance on overseas intervention and assessing recent developments. Djibouti, strategically situated in East Africa, hosts multiple multinational military bases. However, China's military presence in the region stands out as distinctive. A retrospective analysis of China's military engagement in Djibouti underscores its contributions to anti-piracy efforts and regional stability. Despite these contributions, international concerns persist regarding China's potential use of the base to advance its geopolitical interests, prompting discussions about its role in the region. This article underscores China's distinctiveness by drawing comparisons between its military bases in Djibouti and those of other nations. China's substantial investments in resources and infrastructure in Africa reflect its unique approach. Furthermore, recent research suggests shifts in China's military deployment and diplomatic strategy, further enhancing its distinct character. In conclusion, it provides up-to-date insights into China's military presence in Djibouti, enhancing our understanding of China's international military strategy. The disclosure of this information equips the global community with a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of China's military presence in Djibouti and beyond, both on regional stability and the global landscape.

Agnieszka Nitza-Makowska (University of Tartu)

Global South's Environmental Agency: Unpacking China's Responsibility and Power Dynamics in the International Environmental Regime

This paper explores the agency of the Global South, with a focus on China's role in the international environmental regime. In recent years, China has emerged as a key player in global environmental governance, challenging traditional power dynamics and assumptions about the Global South's capacity for agency. The paper critically examines China's responsibility and power within the international environmental framework, shedding light on its evolving role in shaping climate policies and sustainable development initiatives. By scrutinizing China's multifaceted engagement in the international environmental arena, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of the Global South's agency and the transformative potential of emerging powers in shaping global environmental governance and beyond.

Josie-Marie Perkuhn (Trier University)

Green Energy Transition in Taiwan: Innovation and Participation under Tsai's Presidency

Granting for its innovation-driven outlook, under the presidency of Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文, Taiwan has presented itself as a pioneering actor. Taiwan seeks to reduce its total consumption by efficiency and aims for a greener energy mix to ensure a sustainable energy supply. The installation of new nuclear power plants became politically unthinkable. Burning up fossil fuels is highly unwelcome, increasingly costly, and a source of strategic vulnerabilities. Taiwan's energy industry relies up to 97 per cent on imported energy sources, such as crude oil (44.1%) and coal (30%). In light of the growing tension across the straits, cutting off the energy supply could have devastating consequences for Taiwan. When Tsai took office in 2016, it boosted Taiwan's sustainable agenda. And recently further incentives (e.g., Feed-in-Tariffs or the 12-Key Strategies Action Plan) were announced to pursue a green energy transition. Although the geographical conditions and the political will seem beneficial, observers criticized the slow progress. Green energy transition is a comprehensive project alternating between promised progress and stagnation. Therefore, this paper analyses the situation in Taiwan and asks how participative the process actually is. In doing so, this study tackles the triangle of the political agenda set by Tsai's government, the implemented tools for public participation and the procuring actors in the case of offshore wind farming and ocean energy. Putting Tsai's presidency under scrutiny, this contribution seeks to analyze participation in the case of green energy transition in Taiwan.

Anastasia Sinitsyna (University of Tartu)

Which is Greener: Collaboration or Competition Between China and the EU?

In recent years, the discourse surrounding China has undergone a discernible transformation. Divergent perspectives have emerged, characterizing China as a systemic rival, a competitor, or a potential collaborator across various domains. When probed for instances illustrating the ongoing partnership between Europe and China, diplomatic and policymaking authorities frequently address the issue of ‘climate change.’ In the realm of foreign policy, climate diplomacy stands out as a noteworthy domain where collaboration with China not only appears feasible but also desirable. Nevertheless, the EU collaboration with China, the largest global emitter of greenhouse gases, in the domain of climate change, experienced significant challenges when economic interests oppose the willingness of collaboration. China’s strategic investments in green technologies, research and development, and the intention for holding a global leadership in emerging green industries, introduce layers of green technologies competition between EU and China. This presentation posits that the overarching conceptualization of a ‘partnership’ does not longer capture the nuanced interaction between the EU and China in the domain of climate policy. Climate action is increasingly dependent on geopolitical and geo-economic considerations. Consequently, the isolation of climate issues from the broader tapestry of geopolitical dynamics is becoming progressively indefensible.

Christoph H. Steinhardt (University of Vienna) (co-authors: Xue GONG, University of Vienna, and Jan Delhey, University of Magdeburg)

Chasing a Phantom: A Reassessment of China’s “Trust Crisis”

Over the past two decades, an alleged “trust crisis” has been the staple of social commentary in China. The perception of crisis prompted the state to initiate the Social Credit System to engineer a trustworthy society. However, the evidence for a social trust crisis in China is surprisingly contradictory. Trust has been found to be declining over time, by some studies, and increasing, by others. Some scholars have found that aspects of socio-economic modernization are negatively associated with trust, while others found the opposite. This study intends to reassess this debate and its empirical basis. First, the paper summarizes comparative scholarship and examines the public debate and scholarly research on social trust in China. Second, it draws on five waves of panel surveys and six waves of cross-sectional surveys between 1990 and 2020 to study the evolution of the levels of general and particular trust, as well as the radius of trust. It does not find convincing evidence for a “crisis of trust,” defined as a decline or breakdown. Rather, the levels of social trust, as well as the trust radius, have seen a modest increase over the years. Third, the study also examines the relationships between measures of modernization, both individual and collective, and different forms of social trust. Modernization indicators are either independent from or modestly positively associated with measures of general social trust and modestly negatively correlated with particular social trust. Based on this evidence, the paper reinterprets the discussion on the “trust crisis” in China.

Elo Süld (University of Tartu)

China's Global Ambitions and the MENA Region: A Focus on the Environmental Issues

China's engagement in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region goes beyond local dynamics and has implications on a global scale, especially concerning climate, food, water, and health security, along with supply chain sustainability. A notable example of this is Iraq, acknowledged by the UN as the fifth most vulnerable country to the climate crisis. The challenges faced by Iraq present a complex situation. Firstly, there is a critical issue of water scarcity in the southern part of the country, primarily due to the necessity of pumping water for oil drilling. Secondly, the extent of gas flaring within a 70 KM radius of Basra exceeds the combined flaring volume of Saudi Arabia, China, Canada, and India. Following the Ukraine war, Iraq's oil exports by European and Chinese companies experienced a 40% surge, significantly amplifying the already doubled figures recorded between 2010 and 2019. This scenario offers an opportunity for collaboration with China to address and stabilize climatic conditions. Neglecting to do so may lead to adverse, serious, and perilous geopolitical consequences in southern Iraq. These consequences hold the potential to further destabilize the region, resulting in migratory pressures and other security threats over time. Proactive engagement becomes imperative for stakeholders to counteract the potential erosion of influence in MENA. A passive approach risks the emergence of a region that not only remains indifferent to external interests but could evolve into a potential adversary. Urgency lies in mitigating these environmental and geopolitical challenges, fostering cooperation that not only addresses immediate concerns but also ensures long-term stability and security in the region.

Alexander Trauth-Goik (University of Vienna)

Moral Ascription and Integrity Propaganda Under China's Social Credit System Project

State and market actors increasingly rely on the use of surveillance and computer processing systems to extract, catalogue, and amalgamate data about different actors to evaluate and deliver privileges and punishments. This study uses the Chinese Social Credit System Project (SCSP) as a case study to investigate how such systems of 'social sorting' and the official messaging around them shape existing ideas about credit, morality, and status in China today. It traces the development of what the author calls, 'integrity propaganda' which epitomizes the state's utilization of traditional governance philosophies to legitimize the SCSP and its concomitant rewards and punishments. Based on thirty qualitative video interviews with residents across twenty Chinese cities, a 'Hierarchy of Credit and Moral Ascription' is advanced to conceptualize how the SCSP transforms existing civic stratifications, impacting which groups in Chinese society people believe ought to be subject to social credit punishments, such as blacklisting, naming and shaming, credit deduction, and why.

Arthur WONG (University of Cambridge)

Revisit Taiwan's Deterrence Strategies in the Face of Escalating Chinese Influence

This paper assesses the feasibility of the ‘deterrence by punishment’ approach (Montgomery 2020) as a substitute for the traditional ‘deterrence by denial’ strategy (Synder 1959) in response to China’s growing influence in East Asia. The goal is to prevent conflicts and preserve the peaceful status quo of the Cross-Strait relations. To evaluate the viability of the ‘deterrence by punishment’ approach, this paper seeks to answer two primary research questions. The first question is whether this approach is more advantageous than the conventional ‘deterrence by denial’ approach. The second part discusses the appropriate stage of China’s development for implementing the ‘deterrence by punishment’ policy. It is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of the ‘deterrence by punishment’ strategy in preventing China from invading Taiwan and ensuring peace in the region. This paper will be structured as follows. To answer the first research question, I compare the conventional ‘deterrence by denial’ policy towards China with the recently adopted ‘deterrence by punishment’ approach in the US foreign policy. This can be observed through the changes in arms sales, including the volcano mine system and mobile stinger (Wong and Ismay 2022). Secondly, I will examine the historical context of emerging powers and analyse the power shift between the US and China to identify the optimal timing for implementing the ‘deterrence by punishment’ strategy. In addition, I compare China’s revisionist challenges to the international order with those of other major powers throughout history (Ward 2017).

Mugur Zlotea (Bucharest University)

A Dream to Fight For – Framing the Chinese Dream in the Student Reader of Xi Jinping’s Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era for a New Era

One of the main objectives of the CCP is promoting a unified vision of various aspects regarding Chinese history, politics, ideology, culture, and, in the last decade, dreaming. China Dream is one of the most important concepts of the current political discourse. There is hardly any important public speech by Xi Jinping without mentioning it, and there is basically no way of escaping it; wherever you go in China, there will always be a billboard, a poster or a slogan reminding you of the Dream. The constant mentioning of the Dream not only shows the importance of the concept, but also the difficulty of implementing it. In July 2021, the Chinese Ministry of Education required schools to integrate Xi Jinping Thought into their curriculum, and the month, the *Student Reader of Xi Jinping’s Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era for a New Era*, a set of four textbooks for K12 students, were published by the People’s Publishing House and the People’s Education Press. The paper looks at how the Chinese Dream is framed in the *Readers*, to identify the discursive strategies employed to make a fuzzy concept palatable to the young audience, and how the Dream is explained differently to different age groups. Our analysis will try to identify the devices and metaphors used to ensure that the messages reach its intended audience, and have individual dreams converge towards the same greater dream of common prosperity.



ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Christoph Anderl (Ghent University)

Text-Image Relations in the Panels on Buddha's Life in Mogao Cave 61

10th century Mogao Cave 61 was built during a period when the Dunhuang Cao family was at the zenith of its power and had secured political stability and economic growth. In addition to the typical program of Sūtra Transformation tableaux covering the main walls, Cave 61 features the most detailed visualization of Buddha's life in the Dunhuang area, covering the lower register of three walls, and consisting of 33 panels, each panel being sub-divided into several scenes, adding up to more than 150 detailed scenic depictions. As another unique feature, every depiction is accompanied by a caption with a detailed textual description of the scene. This is quite unusual, since in Mogao captions typically only provide fragmentary references to the related images. Most of the text portions can be identified as being extracted from the *Foben xingji jing* 佛本行集經, an extensive Buddha biography popular in the Dunhuang area and probably originating in the Gandhāra area. In the presentation, the focus will be on the relationship between the textual passages as laid out in the captions, and how they relate to the base text and the visual medium of the wall paintings. These complex relations will be exemplified by two case studies, one focusing on the panel section on Buddha's life in the palace, and the second one focusing on the abstract notion of the lineage of Śākyamuni Buddha.

Marta R. Bisceglia (University of Bologna)

The New Era of Chinese Graffiti: Bombing, Calligraphy and Emotional Expressions Along the Streets

After examining the birth, the development and the peculiar characteristics of the Chinese graffiti art movement, this paper will focus on (1) some representative artists belonging to different contexts, cities and trends. Some of them have an artistic background linked to the academic studies or to their works, while others continue to carry on the "old school" with illegal bombing, but almost all of them combine the Western graffiti art movement with the Chinese artistic and cultural tradition, using characters, calligraphy and ancient Chinese symbols. In order to explore the diffusion of graffiti art in China in greater depth, this paper also presents (2) a new movement called "prose-based graffiti," through which anonymous writers express feelings, experiences, and thoughts with spray cans in public places. These large-scale writing, though hardly pleasing in any aesthetic sense, intended for the public eye is often critical, meant to denounce, shame, or draw attention to societal issues. Most of them were collected by Chinese Graffiti Hub, an Instagram and Weibo account that aggregates photos of amateur graffiti from China. Through the analysis of some selected artworks, the purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the use of Chinese writing and calligraphy in contemporary graffiti across PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Daniele Caccin (University of Bologna)

The Contemporary Hybridization of Chinese Calligraphy and Its Continuity/Discontinuity with the Calligraphic Tradition: The Case of Wang Dongling's Experimental Ink Movement

From the mid-1980s onwards the theoretical discourse on calligraphy and its artistic production has been enriched with new ideas and forms of art. The present paper aims to illustrate the changing panorama in contemporary Chinese calligraphy through the analysis of emblematic artworks by Wang Dongling 王冬齡 (b. 1945), one of the most influential artists in the development of contemporary calligraphy and ink painting in China and leading theorist of the modernist current (Barrass 2002), focusing on two main aspects. The first part intends to discern the continuity / discontinuity with the calligraphic tradition in the production of contemporary works. From this perspective, Wang aims to find the right balance to reconcile tradition and innovation, using materials and tools of the past (i.e. bamboo, ink) and of the contemporaneity (digital technologies, augmented reality, propylene, acrylic paint). Furthermore, the artist's research of a personal and experimental style, featuring his 'chaos script' (*luanshu* 乱书), expanded the tradition with a peculiar visual impact made up of dynamic lines that radically depart from prior conventions. The second part focuses on the influence of different artistic forms on Chinese calligraphy and critically reconsiders Wang Dongling's work as a contemporary hybridization of calligraphy. New original artworks created by contemporary artists through multiple modalities grows prolifically, featuring a strong abstract, expressive, conceptual, and performative force. This highly expressive-communicative new language enhances the expressive potential of calligraphy and can be considered as a bridge between Chinese calligraphy and traditional, modern and contemporary art.

Jiehua CAI (University of Munich)

Re-Tracing Self-Reflective Painting in China

Chinese traditional art does apparently not constitute an exception to André Chastel's theorem that art itself has an "invincible tendency" to represent its own making within the "bosom" of that very art. On the contrary, as the seminal works of Wu Hung and Craig Clunas have demonstrated, Chinese pictorial art seems to fit neatly into the line of his argumentation and proves once more Chastel's breadth of vision. The proposed presentation will show that the various techniques and topics for the visual expression of self-reflectivity cannot be understood without taking the religious influences on the art discourse into account. In a first step, we will therefore pick up the trail by re-discussing the social function of displaying art and the artificial display of the prominent "mountain-and-water" paintings within paintings. A closer look at the theoretical requirements for painting in the new literati style and for savoring their artwork will help to re-phrase the key terms of "artifice" and "image/picture," "art" and "nature," as well as "real" and "illusion" in the specific Chinese context. A guided tour through a handful of literati works will then re-trace the reflective capacities of ink paintings beyond the evident motifs of screens, pictures, or mirrors within paintings. In short, the presentation will endeavor to re-think Chastel's insights within the framework of Chinese art theory by re-visiting selected ink paintings of the Song and Yuan dynasties in order to probe into a "sinicized" concept of "pictures-within-pictures."

Xuan CHEN (Peking University)

A Study of Foreign Influences on Stone-Carved Tombs in Early China

A number of publications have developed theories on why stone suddenly became a popular material for tomb construction in Han Dynasty (221 BC-220 AD) China and how foreign masonry techniques were brought to China from across Eurasia. The object of this paper is to further examine the reception of foreign masonry architectural techniques through an analysis of stone-carved tombs from early China. It argues that the reception of foreign masonry techniques was based on the demands generated by using stone as the primary tomb building material during the Han Dynasty. Through the introduction of advanced masonry techniques, new understandings of the material world were incorporated into masonry architecture in a Chinese cultural context. The paper examines the ceilings and columns that were fundamental to providing support in the subterranean stone tombs. The lantern ceiling and the stepped ceiling of the Han Dynasty stone tombs are traced to the ceilings of the monumental tombs in the Hellenistic world. Since the ceiling was crucial to the depiction of heaven, its construction was closely related to the belief in the cult of the Queen Mother of the West, who was the goddess of the world of immortality and the newly imported religion of Buddhism. The fluted columns of the Han Dynasty stone tombs are traced to the stone architecture in the Hellenistic world as well. Consequently, fluting became the symbol of the natural quality of stone, which was closely related to immortality, the ultimate pursuit of the Han Dynasty people.

Rita Dal Martello (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Xinjiang as a Corridor of Diffusion and Exchange: The Archaeobotanical Evidence

Xinjiang Province, strategically located in Northwest China at the crossroads of agricultural Central China and the steppes, forms a crucial link between modern China, northern Central Asia, and beyond. In recent years, there has been a steady increase in archaeological discoveries within the province. Systematic scientific analyses of these recent excavations, including the recovery of plant remains, are reshaping our understanding of Xinjiang's role in historical crop diffusion. This talk will review the latest archaeobotanical findings in Xinjiang and explore their contributions to reconstructing past migration routes and the influence they had in shaping both past and present Chinese cuisine.

Pauline A. Duval (EPHE/CRCAO, Paris)

Shell versus Sand, Four Thousand Years of Technological Choices: Petrographic Analysis of Neolithic Pottery in Northeast China

In Northeast China, the coexistence of hunter-gatherer societies and societies transitioning to agriculture during the Neolithic (6000-2000 BC) is already well known. Both economies had well-developed ceramic productions, but how did they differ to meet different needs? This research focuses on raw material processing to highlight technological disparities in pottery production. To answer this question, 2 sites in two different regions of Northeast China, the Liaoxi region and the Lower Nen River Valley, were studied using petrographic analysis. In the Liaoxi region, where societies were transitioning to agriculture, there is no clear grouping of pottery fabrics per chronological phase. It seems raw materials were opportunistically selected from different sources. Potters knew different raw material processing to optimize ceramic functions. For example, during Hongshan culture (4500-3000BC), cooking and storage pots as large cylindrical jars had a coarse sandy temper to increase thermal shock resistance. Painted bowls used to serve or to present food had a fine clay paste, probably refined by settling. In the Lower Nen River Valley, in a context of hunter-gatherer economy, each chronological phase yielded potteries showing only one fabric, and all are characterized by the presence of shell fragments, although in different proportions. During the Sixth millennium, shell fragments quantities were high enough to have an impact on the physical properties of the objects. But, after this first chronological phase, shell fragments were mixed with a lot of sandy inclusions and had no real impact on the properties of the artefacts. The persistence of such inclusions can thus be considered as a cultural choice, revealing a desire from potters to maintain a tradition or an identity.

Marcella Festa (Northwest University, Xi'an)

Life in the Mines: Preliminary Zooarchaeological Research in Heishanling, Xinjiang (China

Situated at a pivotal geographic junction, the Eastern Tianshan Mountain region in Northwest China is key to comprehending the economic, social, and cultural dynamics that underpinned the flourishing of the Silk Road. While zooarchaeology has significantly illuminated the role of animal use in the everyday lives of local communities, research often focuses on residential, funerary, and bone crafting sites, thus neglecting contexts linked to specialized production. This results in a knowledge gap regarding past lifestyles in this area. This study investigates the animal remains found at the Iron Age Heishanling turquoise mine in Hami, Xinjiang, aiming to enhance our understanding of local faunal exploitation strategies and their relationship to the increasing socio-economic complexity in the region during the first millennium BCE.

Feng GUO (University of Edinburgh)

The Borderland as the National Landscape: Nature and Animals of the Northwest in Wartime Chinese Paintings (1937-1945)

This study focuses on the copious depictions of China's northwest region during the War of Resistance against Japan, examining how the frontier landscape was reinvented to portray China's national image. Deviating from the art history angle accentuating forms and techniques, I treat the fervour of depicting the Northwest borderland as a cultural phenomenon, putting it into intertwined contexts of the narrative tradition about the northern borderland in Chinese literature and art as well as the overwhelming nationalist discourse in wartime Chinese media. Moreover, inspired by posthumanism and animal history, I re-direct the focus in previous studies on ethnic figures to nature and animals in frontier pictures, emphasizing the agency of non-human beings in building China's national image from a visual perspective. Centring on the key symbol of the northern borderland – the camel, I trace it from premodern Chinese visual arts to wartime paintings. Then I extend my inquiry to the interchangeable role of the camel and the horse, as well as new animal imageries in wartime Northwest paintings. Paying attention to visual configurations and narratives, I perform analysis on certain motifs and paradigms combining animals, natural elements, and human beings. By examining nature and animals in visual representations, I shed light on the changing image of the Northwest borderland in Chinese cultural imagination from the other-land to our-land, as well as the emblem of motherland.

Shu Fung LEUNG (CUHK)

Ecological Constraints and Cultural Reception: A Study of Date Palm Motifs on Changsha Kiln Ceramics

The Changsha Kiln in China, active during the 7th to 9th centuries, was a notable folk kiln of the period, with many of its ceramic products being exported to regions such as Japan, Korea, Iran, and Arabia. Prior research has predominantly centered on the technical craftsmanship and the kiln's role in maritime trade, with less attention given to the cultural significance of the patterns adorning these ceramics. This study focuses on ceramics featuring date palm motifs that have been unearthed in locales including China, Indonesia, and Iran, demonstrating their widespread distribution as maritime trade goods of the period. The date palm, with its significant edible and symbolic value in West Asia, was introduced to China by merchants during the 7th to 9th centuries. However, due to ecological constraints, it could not be successfully cultivated within Chinese borders. This paper aims to address two primary concerns: Firstly, it seeks to decode the symbolic meanings associated with these date palm patterns and to elucidate their connections to West Asian cultures. Secondly, it compares these motifs with depictions of date palms in Chinese historical literature, investigating how their presence on Changsha Kiln ceramics may have influenced the Chinese understanding and imagination of the date palm in this historical period.

Yan LIU (Northwestern Polytechnical University, Xi'an)

Images of Interaction: Lions and Griffins in Early Chinese Gold

Lions and griffins, the two legendary beasts became very popular in Chinese art from the 5th century BCE onward, and they were known to people in West and Central Asia in the 7th century BCE or earlier. The current paper examines a variety of early Chinese gold ornaments with the depiction of lions, griffins and other exotic animals in the first millennium BCE in a broader Eurasian context. Drawing from the archaeologically recovered gold artefacts in north-west China and the Eurasian steppes, two trends of the artistic traditions in early Chinese gold-working industry could be recognized in the material record: the widespread zoomorphic figures and the aspiration to distinctive emblems of power and status attached to foreign styles. A comprehensive analysis on artistic styles and technical features of the gold objects allows us to identify distinct choices of styles, techniques and iconographies in different regions while the scientific data provide important clues for the provenance study of some objects with debatable origins. Tracing the divergent trajectories of the images of lions and griffins, this research will also discuss how new iconographies and techniques from foreign lands were incorporated into prestige gold production in local society, and contributed to identity (re)construction by their users and makers.

Yi LIU (East Tennessee State University)

Visual Voyages: Liangyou's Traveling Cameramen and the Cosmopolitan Imagination of China in the Early 1930s

In the early 1930s, the Liangyou Company (Young Companion) dispatched a group of editors and photographers to travel through most provinces of the country for over seven months, taking over 10,000 photographs. This national photography tour led to a series of illustrated reportages, photo exhibitions, and photobooks. This paper offers a fresh perspective on this national photography tour by reconsidering its contributions and limitations in informing the public about the living realities of their nation through photography. On one hand, beyond the company's immediate commercial success and its pioneering investigation of the Northwest borderland, my study argues that this tour was also a social campaign that educated the public about the unique and multifaceted value of photographic archives in defining modern China during the republican era, a time when the cultural capital of images became consolidated and empirical investigations stood for modernity and truthfulness. Central to this analysis is the examination of the photobook *China As She Is* (1934), a direct product of the tour. I underscore its significance within the historical trajectory of encyclopedic photobooks by comparing it with similar works produced before and after 1934. On the other hand, through media studies of the tour's reports and advertisements, as well as the book itself, my analysis takes into account the intersectional identities of the creators and readers in socio-economic and ethnic aspects, examining the complicated blend of documentation and imagination of the periphery during the formative phase of armchair travelers in cosmopolitan Shanghai.

Katarina Lučić (University of Bologna)

Representing the Chinese Contemporary Calligraphy: The WRITE Digital Archive

This paper aims to present the ongoing work on the construction of the WRITE digital archive, which stores heterogeneous artworks belonging to the four WRITE collections: 1) visual artwork, 2) decorative and applied art, 3) performance and 4) graffiti. The WRITE data model hence encompasses a comprehensive collection of Chinese contemporary calligraphic data stored in this archive. The methodology follows the principles of Semantic Web and in particular Linked Open Data. The WRITE data model is being built with the scope of obtaining knowledge from three types of analysis: 1) artistic, 2) linguistic and 3) socio-political. The model represents the artistic and technical features of the artworks, by also including other contextual aspects. A particular attention within the model is dedicated to the presence of the “calli-writing unit” within a specific artwork. These units are individually described from the artistic perspective, but the model strives to examine them also from a linguistic point of view. The base for the WRITE data model lays within reusing the Wikidata model. However, due to the lack of ontologies for describing calligraphy, the WRITE ontology was created (and is still being updated) in order to cover all the peculiarities related to the, in this case, Chinese contemporary calligraphy. In this way, the archive can offer insights into shared and diverging characteristics with traditional calligraphy. All the data stored in the archive can be browsed and queried, thus providing advanced valuable knowledge on these new forms of calligraphy.

Martina Merenda (University of Bologna)

Calligraphy and Performance Art in Contemporary China

There are many similarities between calligraphy and performance art: 1. the focus on the artist’s action; 2. the involvement of the artist’s body; 3. the “processual” and “spontaneous” (but not unplanned) manner; 4. the concept of “experience;” 5. the importance of the interaction with the public audience; 6. the close relationship with other art forms (poetry and painting for calligraphy, dance, theatre, and music for performance art). A lot of contemporary Chinese artists are trying to interconnect these two art forms into innovative artistic practices. These artists can be divided into three main categories: 1. contemporary calligraphers who try to transform calligraphic modes into a performative action to revitalize and modernize calligraphy (e.g., Zhang Qiang, Zhu Qingsheng, Shao Yan, Pu Lieping and Wang Dongling); 2. contemporary artists/performers who use calligraphy as a source of inspiration and a medium for their performative/conceptual works (e.g., Gu Wenda, Qiu Zhijie, Song Dong, Zhang Huan and Wu Wei); 3. female artists/performers who use calligraphy to “give voice” to the feminine (e.g., Wu Xixia, Echo Morgan and Li Xinmo). This paper aims at analysing the most important “calligraphic” performances of some of these artists to demonstrate how this kind of performances can represent not only a means to show the versatility and modernity of calligraphic art in contemporary times, but also a means of opposition to any convention, showing the contradictions of contemporary (Chinese) society and providing reflections on man and the world.

Francesca Monteith (Northwest University, Xi’an)

More than Monks and Merchants: Re-examining the Landscape Archaeology of “Silk Road” Sites in Xinjiang

For many scholars the archaeology of Southern Xinjiang is synonymous with the archaeology of the Silk Road. This has led to a research paradigm which focuses on large scale cultural exchange, mainly in terms of religion, trade and politics. However, such approaches have a tendency to overlook the motivations of the local kingdoms and cultures of the Tarim Basin. This paper examines the landscape archaeology of religious sites dating to the 1st Millenium CE in the Turfan and Kuqan Oases from the perspective of local habitation and use.

Sylvia Tongyan QIU (University of California, Los Angeles)

Unruly Gems in the Imperial Order: Hat Finials and the Mapping of Gemmological Networks of the Qing Dynasty, 1636-1796

Assembled from un-faceted, polished pieces of gems, hat finials (*maoding* 帽頂 or *guanding* 冠頂), were worn by members of the imperial family and officials of the Qing dynasty. With Manchurian freshwater pearls representing the imperial clan, the nine-rank order of officialdom manifested itself in gemmological terms: with ruby representing the highest rank, followed by sapphire, coral, lapis lazuli, quartz, tridacna shell, gold, and silver for the lowest rank. In his *Yuewei caotang biji*, the scholar-official Ji Yun (1724-1805) commented: “When I was young, ginseng, coral, and lapis lazuli were not expensive, now they are; turquoise and tourmaline used to be very expensive, now their prices are lower.” As the multi-ethnic Qing elite fashioned themselves with precious stones from far-flung places of the world and appropriated these extra-terrestrial materials into simultaneous expressions of their multi-layered identities, the gems adorning the hat finials were incorporated into structures of identification, categorisation, and stratification that became critical agents in the production of space, meaning, and hierarchy at the Qing court. From pictorial representations of hat finials, court archives, and extant artefacts, this presentation will demonstrate how the mobility and multivalency of the gems challenged the Qing court’s attempt to impose a universalised sense of visual, material, and symbolic order. With their efflorescent shimmer, the gems on the hat finials transcended the imperial order and connected early modern EurAsian imaginaries as the gems became a part of, and a metaphor of the cosmopolitan and multifaceted Qing empire.

Stephanie Su (University of Colorado at Boulder)

From the Local to the Global: Jiangnan and the Emergence of Transcultural East Asian Aesthetics during the Wartime Period

This paper explores how Jiangnan emerged from a local area to become an emblem of China, Chinese culture and East Asian aesthetics in the early 20th century. During the 1930s and 1940s, representations of China in Japanese popular media often focused on images of the Jiangnan region. This paper focuses on two case studies to examine the divergent visual strategies of depicting Jiangnan among Japanese artists and photographers. The first is the official publication of *Photography Weekly* (*Shashin shuhō*, 1938–1945), issued by the Information Bureau of the Ministry of Interior. The landscape of Jiangnan was predominantly associated with motifs of water, boats, Spring, women, and gardens, evoking a lyrical landscape and the cultural richness of this region. The second case study is a woodblock print by artist Onchi Kōshirō (1891-1955), the leader of the Creative Print Movement. His work, *White Walls [Impressions of Suzhou]* (1940), depicted a partially revealed woman dressed in a blue qipao facing a white latticed window. In this work, Onchi used two colors, blue and white, to represent his impression of Suzhou. Exhibited at the 2,600th Imperial Household Exhibition in 1940, Onchi’s work subtly blended the image of Jiangnan with the Japanese aesthetics, and German modern art style. Through visual and textual analysis, this paper argues that Jiangnan was transformed from a local area to become an ideal symbolizing transcultural aesthetics of East Asia, which, at the same time, justified the imperial ambition of Japan.

Yuxuan WANG (Northwest University, Xi'an)

Societies Among Livestock: Zooarchaeological Evidence from Shirenzigou, Xinjiang (China)

In the Late Bronze and Iron Age of Xinjiang, China, mobile pastoralism emerged as a crucial lifestyle, significantly influencing the region's subsistence methods, craft production, social structures, and cultural and trade connections. While most research has concentrated on long-distance interactions and broad variations in pastoral strategies, there remains a notable gap in detailed zooarchaeological studies. This lack of micro-scale research has led to limited understanding of local animal use practices and their link to regional social organization systems. This paper delves into the faunal remains discovered in three Iron Age stone structures (F2, F3, and F4) at the Shirenzigou site, located in the Eastern Tianshan Mountains. By integrating zooarchaeology with radiocarbon dating and spatial analysis, we aim to uncover the nuances of faunal resource utilization and its correlation with developments of localized socio-economic complexity in the Eastern Tianshan region of Xinjiang during the late first millennium BCE.

Chung-Wei YANG (Academia Sinica)

Image Producing as Revolution: The Tech-Artisans in the Current News Pictorial

In this study, I examine the self-portrayal within the *Current News Pictorial* (*Shishi Illustrated Periodical*, 1905-1911, CNP), launched by the Revolutionary Party led by Sun Yat-sen. Acclaimed for its exceptional printing quality and artistic excellence, CNP is frequently examined for its portrayal of revolutionary propaganda against the Qing regime. My research redirects attention from the propagandist content to the pictorial's reflective representation of its own creation process and the craftsmen involved. This inquiry uncovers how the artists self-identified not merely as creatives but as photolithographic printing technicians, thus revealing their multifaceted role as "tech-artists." By illuminating their tangible engagement in the technical facets of the pictorial's creation, this study showcases the artists' efforts to synchronize their work with the National Product Movement in Guangdong—a movement vigorously advocated by the Revolutionary Party. This paper argues that the significance of CNP lies not solely in the content it depicted but also in the very act of its production, which constituted an essential facet of the industrial advancement integral to the nation-building of new China.

Daniela C. Zhang (Comenius University, Bratislava/Slovakian Academy of Sciences)

Beyond Words: A Journey into Taiwan's Contemporary Large-Character Calligraphy

Calligraphy is an integral part of Chinese culture, weaving its presence seamlessly into the fabric of daily lives. Unlike other art forms, its resonance is pronounced, particularly in the aesthetic impact of larger works that find a place in public spaces. Modern calligraphy, with its heightened expressive power manifests even more compellingly in large inscriptions. The terminology associated with large-character calligraphy, such as *shushu* (署書), *bokeshu* (擘窠書), and *bangshu* (榜書), has been present in Chinese literature throughout the ages. However, it was not until the late Qing dynasty, under the influence of Kang Youwei, that all large-character calligraphy became commonly referred to as *bangshu*; that persists to this day. This presentation explores the realm of large-scale calligraphy, specifically focusing on *bangshu* in Taiwan. Following a brief introduction to the historical context of significant calligraphic inscriptions on steles and temples, the talk will further examine the functionality and practicality of *bangshu*, considering both historical and modern perspectives. Emphasis will be placed on the *bangshu* creations of contemporary calligraphers, including Tong Yang-tze 董陽孜, whom I personally encountered in Beijing, as well as Chen Hung-mien 陳宏勉, Quenten Lee 李蕭錕, Huang Po-szu 黃伯思, and Wang Yi-chun 王意淳, the youngest among the artists mentioned herein. I will analyse and compare the individual styles and distinctive characteristics of each selected artist, taking into account not only their artistic creations but also the impact and presence of their work in public spaces.

Yang ZHOU (Birmingham City University)

A Space for Imagination: Understanding Hidden Narratives of Chinese Literati Gardens Through Contemporary Art

Space in the traditional Chinese literati gardens transcends physical boundaries. Tong Jun called it ‘a pleasant dream’ (Tong 1936); Sirén proclaimed it ‘the ideal world of the painter’ (Sirén 1948); and Keswick wrote that ‘all gardens are based on illusion’ (Keswick 1978). Literati gardens reflect the spatial imaginations of their creators’ spiritual pursuits, particularly the Taoist beliefs, and an invisible realm is embedded within them. Today, the gardens have been severed from their original context. My practice-integrated research examines how contemporary art generates new understandings of literati gardens. Intertwining case study and art practice, this paper considers contemporary artists’ diverse responses to garden spaces. In particular, Peng Wei’s works depict fantastical stories in the gardens. Peng takes inspiration from traditional narratives and her own dreams and presents them from female perspective, redressing historical gender stereotypes. Xu Lei’s paintings imply garden spaces devoid of people, inculcating a sense of mystery. For Xu, gardens are linked to screens frequently appearing in classic Chinese paintings, constituting spaces between the real and mirage. There are no definite narratives in his works, but the viewers are invited into a psychological space, imagining endless stories untold. Having contextualized the works of other artists, my practice utilizes photography to make visible the illusive Immortals’ realm within the gardens in a contemporary allusion to Taoism. Following Harvey’s assertion that photography is a medium of spirit (Harvey 2007), I argue that photography reveals the existence of this invisible realm which still provides a retreat from China’s rapid urban development.

Muyang ZHUANG (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

Speciesist Visuality of Revolution: Qian Binghe’s Caricatures and Cultural Politics in Early Republican China

This research investigates Chinese caricatures in the early 1910s, with specific focus on political cartoonist Qian Binghe (1879–1944). While scholarship on modern Chinese cartoons often focuses on the “golden age” after 1910, the turbulent years preceding it remain underexamined. This research fills this gap by exploring the political cartoons of Qian Binghe (1879–1944) amidst the clash of imperial tradition, revolutionary fervor, and Republican politics. I argue that Qian Binghe’s caricatures on political events in 1910s China represents a “speciesist visuality” of revolution. This research mainly analyzes Qian’s collections *A Pictorial History of the Yuan Shikai Government* (*Yuan zhengfu huashi*, 1913) and *A Hundred Performances of Old Ape* (*Laoyuan baitai*, 1913). Inspired by John Dower’s insights of wartime racism and Thomas Lamarre’s discussion of speciesism in wartime Japanese culture, I examine animal imagery, particularly the homophonic link between “ape” (*yuan*) and the surname of Yuan Shikai (1859–1916). These underground publications offer a dissident’s view of early Republican politics, especially the revolts against Yuan’s dictatorial ambitions. As one of the earliest political cartoon collections published in the Republican era, Qian’s works provide an alternative perspective on understanding the media and political contexts of Chinese caricatures before the subsequent prosperity of cartoon magazine. By doing so, this research expands our understanding of cartooning’s role in shaping political discourse during this pivotal period in China’s history.



MUSEUM STUDIES AND MATERIAL CULTURE

MUSEUM STUDIES AND MATERIAL CULTURE

Tina Berdajs (University of Ljubljana/ZRS Koper)

Tracking Family Histories: (Noble)women Bequestors of Chinese Ceramics in the 19th Century

Until now, no in-depth and detailed study has yet been carried out that would specifically address the collectors and owners of Chinese ceramics in the area present-day Slovenia, the places where these persons lived, how and where they traveled and how they were involved in collectors and/or trading networks of Chinese (especially export) porcelain. Of special consideration are persons of noble status who lived and were active in the 19th century as they donated their valued pieces to the first museum established in the area of present-day Slovenia, the Provincial Museum of Carniola (Krainisches Landesmuseum; today the National Museum of Slovenia). The documents and records of these early donations, as well as objects themselves provide an insight into collectors, owners, and donors, and can give us an insight into their collecting practices. While outlining general findings related to collectors or owners in general, this paper also puts special emphasis on documented (noble)women collectors, donors and bequestors active before the 20th century e.g. Josepha Sorre von Haasberg (active in the early 19th century), Frau Louise Edle von Lehman (1785–1854), and Mathilda Baroness von Lazarini (1794–1833) and expand on their backgrounds and biographies as well as try to determine under what kind of circumstances they acquired and were able to donate or bequest Chinese porcelain (and in some cases other ceramics of East Asian origin) to museum collections.

Sofia Bollo (University of Zurich)

From Soil to Glass Case: Archaeological Heritage in Public Museums in Contemporary China

This paper discusses the role of archaeology within current museum practice in state museums in China. Specifically, it considers permanent exhibitions of prehistoric collections and displays of Neolithic Pottery from China. The analysis is based on primary data collected during field research, including museum displays, interviews with museum staff and questionnaires from museum visitors. The case of Neolithic pottery from China shows how public contemporary museums deliver a narrative account of Chinese civilisation, which fulfils a social and political function, exploiting the past and the inherently incomplete nature of prehistory as a tool to establish present nationalistic features of cultural identity in China. These political strategies reinforce nationalistic values, strengthen cultural identity domestically, and legitimise China's claim for international parity as a world civilisation. The scientific discipline of archaeology, legitimised by the museum's authority, lends credibility to the narratives presented in such exhibitions. This study sheds light on the contemporary museological function of Chinese archaeology and the different narratives on the prehistoric past constructed within public museums. The analysis clarifies how exhibitions of the Neolithic intersect with broader political, cultural, and social narratives about Chinese civilisation in an era of economic neoliberalism and a booming heritage industry.

Alessandra Brezzi (Sapienza University of Rome)

Artistic and Aesthetic Dialogue Between Europe and China in Sheng Cheng's Essays

Jöns, Meusburger, Heffernan (2017) and recent studies on mobility in arts and humanities have shown how "contact zones," as defined by Greenblatt (2010), contribute to the 'mobility of knowledge,' to the production and dissemination of new knowledge. In this paper, we will analyze what new knowledge, perceptions, and artistic images Sheng Cheng 盛成 (1899-1996) brought back to China after his long stay (1920 to 1929) in Europe (mainly France and Italy). Sheng was one of the many students who participated in the "Diligent work and frugal study" program (Qin gong jianxue 勤工俭学). While studying botany and sericulture at French and Italian universities, he showed a deep interest in European humanities. During his sojourn in Europe, he came into contact and forged personal and professional ties with personalities from the French and international cultural world. In this paper we will interweave different bibliographic sources produced by Sheng in order to paint a complete picture of and better understand the artistic dialogue that Sheng established between China and Europe at the beginning of the 20th century: some diary pages that preserve descriptions of museums and artistic works and sensations, impressions of the Chinese traveller triggered by Western art; essays dedicated to Western aesthetic concepts (*Tan Shenmei guannian* 谈审美观念) and some reviews by Sheng on few books dedicated to Chinese art composed by French sinologists in the early 20th century.

Federica Casalin (Sapienza University of Rome)

An Investigation of 19th-Century Chinese Mobility in the Mediterranean Region and the Resemantization of “Bowu”

The west-ward mobility of late Qing travellers has been the subject of numerous studies, aimed at outlining the phenomenon from a diachronic perspective (Zhong ed. 1985; Chen 2007), examining the experience of travelling abroad for specific categories of voyagers, such as diplomatic envoys (Day 2012) and observers (Wang 2018), or reconstructing the experiences and legacies of individual personalities. This study focuses on the relationship between spatial mobility and cultural mobility, particularly in respect to documentary and ideal culture (Williams, 1961). Relying on quantitative and qualitative analysis, it investigates how the mobility of Chinese travellers in the last three decades of the 19th century may have contributed to the resemantization of the compound *bowu* 博物 by broadening its meaning from natural objects to cultural items. The analysis will focus on occurrences of this compound in diaries reporting travels in the Mediterranean region with three specific goals: first, to identify and classify the items that late Qing travellers considered important to note down in their visits to institutions they named *bowuguan* 博物馆, focusing on artefacts and works of art; second, to highlight references to recurring items that may have conveyed the perception of a shared Mediterranean culture from the documentary and/or ideal point of view; third, to detect any Chinese travellers’ perceptions of the Mediterranean as a “transcultural place” inspired by the observation of such cultural objects.

Miriam Castorina (University of Florence)

Huang Juesi and His Contribution to the Dissemination of European Art in China

This paper focuses on Huang Juesi 黄觉寺 (1901-1988), one of the founders and leading figures of the latter Suzhou Academy of Fine Arts, and one of the most prominent art educators in China. Huang arrived in France in 1935 to study art and served his apprenticeship with André Devambez (1867-1944). His sojourn abroad was of paramount importance for his cultural production and, most importantly, for his dissemination work on the history of European art. Many of his publications cover the history of European art. Some examples include *Sumiao hua shuyao* (*On Drawing and Painting*, 1935), which was later used as a textbook; *Ouzhou minghua caifanglu* (*Collection of European Famous Paintings*, 1939), which introduced Western museology in China, and *Ouyou zhishen* (*Writings on My European Travels*, 1944), which mainly focuses on Italian maestros. Despite his significant influence and role in spreading artistic education in China, Huang has received little attention. This study aims to shed light on Huang’s editorial works and on his role in the dissemination of European art, particularly in the context of his mobility as a student which has functioned as a channel for the elaboration of new concepts and for the spread of European culture and art.

Ornella De Nigris (Siena University)

Three Artists’ Views on Art Museum: Liu Haisu, Xu Beihong, and Lin Fengmian

By the end of the 19th century, a new conception of art, known as “*meishu*,” had been circulating in China. While some fine arts exhibitions were organized in the early 20th century, it wasn’t until the late 1920s that the idea of constructing proper art museums, or “*meishuguan*,” was conceived. The modern idea of art promoted during this period aimed to establish a new system of values in the newly formed Republic of China. The “*meishuguan*,” with its function of aesthetic education, was deemed an essential vehicle for rebuilding Chinese society. The establishment of art museums, however, was not only a concern for politicians and intellectuals such as Cai Yuanpei and Lu Xun, but also, and notably, for artists. As artists encountered Western art and art museums, the founding of the “*meishuguan*” became fundamental, embodying the very essence of modernity. Artists of the time, including Liu Haisu (1896-1994), Xu Beihong (1895-1953) and Lin Fengmian (1900-1991), were acutely aware of the aesthetic and spiritual connotations of art. This paper, based on a selection of essays and travelogues written by the three artists, aims to explore and compare their descriptions of art museums visited during their travels in Europe. Additionally, it will delve into how this encounter with European art was intricately connected to their desire to establish art museums in China.

Györgyi Fajcsák (Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts, Budapest)

Moongate in the Ferenc Hoppe Museum of Asiatic Arts in Budapest: Ferenc Hopp and Joseph Haas – Model of Cooperation from the Time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy

The largest and most spectacular object in the villa garden of the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts in Budapest is the Chinese moongate which was realized by the founder of the museum Ferenc Hopp (1833-1919) with the help of Joseph Haas (1847-1896) who was the vice-consul and consul of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Shanghai between 1883-1896. The paper focuses on their relationship and cooperation which can reflect the history of collecting Chinese objects through the mobility of objects and people in the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Construction of the moongate was probably completed in the first half of the 1890s, which history clearly demonstrate direct and indirect contacts between Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and China. Main task of the paper is to describe the documents of this cooperation and present the Chinese art material of the moon gate.

Lisi FENG (Nankai University)

Renaissance Reimagined: The Influence of Italian Renaissance on Chinese Modernization and the Evolution of Artistic Terminology

Between the mid-19th century and the early 20th century, China appeared torn between maintaining its tradition and adopting Western modernity. In this context, this article first explores how two representative intellectuals in the reform movements, Xue Fucheng 薛福成 (1838-1894) and Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858-1927), viewed Italian Renaissance art, as well as the connection between the art reforms that they supported and their political claims. Secondly, two keywords are analysed: art e renaissance, which constitute two cases of reborrowing words from the Japanese language in the 19th and 20th centuries. The two translations of the term art, *meishu* 美术 and *yishu* 艺术, existing up to the present day are discussed; the controversy over the rendering between *wenhua fuxing* 文化复兴 e *wenyi fuxing* 文艺复兴 of the term renaissance and the peculiarities of its lexicographic connotation in authoritative Chinese dictionaries.

Hsuan-Chang HUANG (National Chengchi University)

Science and Strange Stories: The Concepts of “Bowu” and “Gewu” in “Post-Liaozhai” Writings in Late Qing and Early Republican China

The concept of *Gewu zhizhi* 格物致知 (Investigating things to attain knowledge) in traditional Confucianism and literary themes like *Bowu* 博物 (Natural history), *Zhiguai* 志怪 (Supernatural tales), and *Zhiyi* 志異 (Unusual stories), initially served metaphysical purposes related to understanding *Tiandao* 天道 (Heavenly way), ethics, and morality. However, the introduction of Western concepts and disciplines, including physics, science, and logic, gradually shifted these functions toward the pursuit of substantive knowledge in nature and physics. Unlike traditional moralistic themes in *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異, “Post-Liaozhai” writings during the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China demonstrated a dominance of scientific experiences, interpreting “supernatural” phenomena with rational explanations. For instance, works like the “Anti-Liaozhai” series in the 1904 *New Novel* (*Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說), the “Museum” column in the 1930s’ *Liaozhai* magazine, and serialized columns such as “Scientific Liaozhai” in *Shenbao* 申報 and *Science Pictorial* (*Kexue huabao* 科學畫報), along with numerous 1940s articles, reinterpreted *Liaozhai* through a scientific lens. This paper analyses how intellectuals in the late Qing and early Republican era reshaped traditional concepts like *wu*, *gewu*, and *bowu* under the influence of scientific rationality. It explores how they used “Liaozhai” as a creative theme, replacing traditional moral functions with an amplification of the epistemological understanding of *wu* in tangible experiences.

Mei Mercier (IFRAE, INALCO, Paris)

Crossed Views on the Chinese Imperial Seals Once Displayed at the Guimet Museum

While the travel journals of the Chinese in the West have been studied through the prism of intellectual history, their interpretation in terms of material culture remains rare. Xue Fucheng (1838-1894), an ambassador to Europe (1890-1894), Kang Youwei (1858-1927), a distinguished literatus and close advisor to Emperor Guangxu, along with Prince Zaize (1868-1929), the emperor's cousin, respectively visited the Guimet Museum. They all discovered Chinese imperial seals there and made these discoveries known in their travel journals. At the request of Prince Zaize, Émile Guimet returned two Qianlong seals from his private collection to the Dowager Empress Cixi in June 1906. Through these travel journals, existing studies on Qianlong seals, and unpublished archives preserved at the Guimet Museum, this article aims to present a dozen seals that have, at various times, been displayed at the Guimet Museum. We shall provide an account of their biography, including their provenance and production, their uses, and the perceptions held by Chinese travelers. Additionally, we will explore the circumstances surrounding Émile Guimet's return of the two Qianlong's seals and how he realized the importance that the Chinese attributed to the imperial seals.

Helena Motos (Science and Research Centre Koper)

Between Random Objects and Collecting Agendas – Josip Mantuani's Plan for the Chinese Collection in the Rudolfinum Museum in Ljubljana

The paper focuses on the complex period in the history of Slovenian museums and their collections, the final decades of the Austrian-Hungarian rule. Josip Mantuani, then the new director of the Rudolfinum, the main museum institution in the Carniolian capital Ljubljana, greatly reformed its collecting practices. In addition to his other interests, most notably archaeology, he also started an organized attempt to assemble a "Chinese collection," inspired by the related developments in Austria-Hungary – the 1873 Vienna World Fair, the establishment of the Oriental Museum in Vienna, etc. In doing so, he had to negotiate the already existing array of randomly acquired Chinese objects that came to the museum from private collectors with his agenda to organize a comprehensive Chinese collection. For the latter, he struggled to find a reliable provider and resorted to an unusual arrangement with a Franciscan missionary in China, Peter Baptist Turk. The paper analyses Mantuani's complex agenda and its inspirations and is based on the analysis of previously non-researched archival documents in today's National Museum of Slovenia. It follows his correspondence with Turk and the complex negotiating process between the missionary and the director on the composition of the collection. It finally follows the history of the Chinese objects within the context of museum history and analyses the reasons why they ultimately never became the intended "Chinese collection."

Alexandra Nachescu (University of Vienna)

Imperial Dispatches from a Shanghai Antiques Shop: Acquiring and Documenting Chinese Art on the Imperial Expedition to East Asia (1868–1870)

The Imperial East Asia and South America Expedition was launched between 1868–1870 in the context of increased interest on the side of the Double Monarchy in extending its diplomatic and commercial reach in East and South-East Asia and South America. Aside from its primary diplomatic and commercial aims the expedition collected samples Asian craftsmanship for the Museum of Art and Industry, also documenting objects whose purchase was not possible. The scientific lead Karl von Scherzer (1821–1903) appointed "correspondents" to the Museum among Western collectors in Asia. Drawing on archival material in the MAK archive and the Austrian State Archive, as well as contemporary published sources, this paper will survey the acquisitions made in China by the Imperial Expedition, the photographic documentation produced of Chinese objects by the expedition photographers and the network-building that the exhibition members engaged in. It aims to demonstrate how the collecting activities on the Imperial Expedition established long-lasting channels for the movement of objects from China to Austria-Hungary. The acquisitions made by the expedition members, though numbering less than 40 pieces, can be considered emblematic exchanges that established practices for collecting, network-building and scholarly exchange that shaped not only the exhibitions at the Vienna World Fair of 1873, but also the formation of the Chinese collections of the Oriental Museum and Imperial Natural History Museum in the decades to come.

Lukas Nickel (University of Vienna)

The Competing Chinas in the Austro-Hungarian Capital

The strong presence of China and Japan at the Vienna World's Fair of 1873 initiated growing interest in East Asia among the public Austro-Hungary and beyond. Museums began building collections and holding special exhibitions, Austrian agents in East Asia started providing a constant stream of craft and art works to Vienna's art dealers, and porcelain vases, lacquered screens and painted fans became standard interior design elements of bourgeois Gründerzeit homes. By the later 19th century, Vienna embraced Far Eastern material culture. The weave of appreciation especially of China was, however, not the first in Austria. The newly erected Kunsthistorische Museum and many castles such as Schönbrunn contained extensive Chinese holdings that had originated in collecting practices of earlier periods, namely the 16th and 18th centuries, and offered competing approaches to Chinese art. This paper will investigate the differing ideas regarding collecting East Asian art in the cultural landscape of Vienna around 1900.

Georg Noack (Linden-Museum Stuttgart)

Daoist Objects at the Linden-Museum Stuttgart

The Linden-Museum Stuttgart houses substantial collections of Chinese art and material culture. Among these are a number of objects relating to Daoist beliefs and practices including representations of various immortals and deities in bronze, wood, ivory, rhinoceros horn, painting and ceramic as well as objects relating to practices such as traditional Chinese medicine and Feng Shui. In collaboration with Daoist practitioners as well as researchers based at the Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan, we are currently researching these objects and developing concepts for exhibiting in them in the framework of a larger transcultural exhibition on human-nature relations. This paper will present preliminary findings and ideas for their presentation, seeking to discuss them with the audience.

Laura Pozzi (University of Warsaw)

Looking for Chinese History Outside the People's Republic: The Museums of the Overseas Chinese in Thailand

This paper examines how communities of Overseas Chinese based in Thailand understand their heritage and memorialize their history in museums, asking if these institutions offer alternative representations of the past compared to the sanctioned version of history displayed in museums in the People's Republic of China (PRC). By juxtaposing the nationalist representations embedded in the PRC's memorialization of China's past to those shown in museums of Overseas Chinese in Thailand, this paper looks for diversity of discourses on China's history and asks questions about the agencies which shape the heritage of the Chinese communities outside the PRC. How do the Chinese communities based in Thailand represent their history in museums? Are they influenced by the PRC's increasingly Sinocentric narrative, or they propose a more nuanced vision of China's past? How much are they influenced by national agencies (monarchy, local communities, religious communities, legal code)? To what degree can the CCP impact the representation of Chinese history outside the borders of the PRC? This paper will answer these questions through the analysis of the Samphanthawong Museum (Bangkok), The Museum of the Descendant of the Dragon (Suphan Buri), the Yaorawat Heritage Centre (Bangkok), and the Thaihua School Museum (Phuket). While they present similarities, each of these institutions proposes different perspectives on the history of China, on the Chinese communities in Thailand, and on their contemporary relations with the PRC and the Thai monarchy.

Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik (University of Ljubljana)

From Dresden to Carniola: Chinese Objects in Snežnik Castle

Chinese and Japanese objects came to present-day Slovenia in various ways, mostly as direct purchases in East Asia, but also via art dealers and other purchases in Europe. Another route was the movement of the nobility, who brought objects with them to decorate their new residences. This paper takes a closer look at one such example, the move of the German aristocratic Schönburg-Waldenburg family from Hermsdorf near Dresden to Snežnik Castle in the south of present-day Slovenia. They bought the castle in 1853. It remained in their possession until 1945 when it was nationalised and became one of the protocol residences of the then Republic of Slovenia within Yugoslavia. When the family came to Carniola, which was then part of the Austrian Empire (later Austria-Hungary), they renovated the castle into a comfortable hunting residence and furnished it with objects that they brought mainly from Dresden. Among the many valuable objects were Chinese and Japanese objects. In order to reconstruct the routes and mobility of these objects and the extent to which they were part of the aristocratic heritage, the paper discusses the types of East Asian objects they brought to this region, how these objects were acquired and how they were displayed. In addition, the relocation of objects between castles and protocol residences after the Second World War will be discussed to illustrate the constant mobility and the way in which an object's identity and value changed under different systems.

Maja Veselič (University of Ljubljana)

Visualizing Mobility of Chinese Objects in the Seafarers' Collections in Slovenia

While navy personnel have been significant agents in the mobility of Chinese objects from China to Austro-Hungary, this is all the truer for collections held in the heritage institutions in Slovenia, where most East Asian objects that were brought to these lands before WW2 come from K. u. K. navy men's legacies. As Marinac (2017) shows, what seafarers brought home depended greatly on their rank, not only due to the differences in financial situation, but also because the rank determined how often and how far inland they were able to travel and how much storage space was available to them. Unfortunately, very few of them have recorded any information on how and where they obtained the objects, but from contextual information and provenance research my colleagues and I have been able to piece together some data for two officers, Ivan Kristan who sailed to China twice in the 1900s, and Ivan Skušek jr., who was a POW in Beijing during the WW1. This allowed us to present mobility of selected objects in visual form with the help of ArcGIS StoryMaps tool. The paper will detail the research process and various considerations that have guided our decisions on specific functionalities of the tool. It will reflect on the advantages of relatively simple visualisations for the presentation of research findings, and even the research itself.

Renata Vinci (University of Palermo)

Connecting the Dots for a Map of the Mediterranean Artistic Tradition Through the Pages of Kang Youwei's Travel Accounts

The "Medi-terranean" is a region among lands identified as a "transcultural space," which cannot be enclosed in the traditional concept of national borders. Apart from the historical events deriving from the geographical closeness of the people facing the sea, one must not forget that its strategic position allowed the encounter among civilisations located very far from each other, as in the case of China, whose sources mention the Mediterranean since the Han. It is mainly after the Opium Wars that a high number of Chinese explorers and diplomats reached Europe, moved by official duties or personal interest. Their accounts provide first-hand observations of the Mediterranean culture, showing how borders and geopolitical partitions – which varied throughout history – were not always as relevant as the shared cultural background that bonds Mediterranean peoples. This perspective can be observed in the description of elements of both material and non-material culture and is the main object of the ongoing research project "The Mediterranean through Chinese Eyes." Within this framework, to contribute to this panel, a selection of case studies from the accounts of one of the most influential Chinese intellectuals and world-travellers at the end of the Chinese empire – Kang Youwei – will be analysed to show the perception of artistic production of the Mediterranean as a part of a collective cultural heritage that transcends the conventional concept of national borders and places Mediterranean art under a collective tradition.

Wenhui ZHENG (National Chengchi University)

The “Bowu” Politics of the “Dianshizhai Pictorial” and Translingual Practice

During the late Qing dynasty’s Guangxu period, the “Dianshizhai Pictorial” emerged as a novel pictorial that utilized images to narrate current news, social trends, and anecdotes. In addition, it featured news on intellectual enlightenment, ethical education, popular subjects, and mass entertainment. Its visual narrative reflected significant cultural dichotomies of the time, such as new/old, tradition/modernity, Chinese/Western, and local/global. This paper centres its discussion around the naturalist thinking and aesthetic coding of *bowu* 博物 as portrayed in the cross-cultural flow of the “Dianshizhai Pictorial.” The main aspects are classified into five categories: 1) Technical viewing and new visual forms: visual media and visual modernity; 2) Knowledge production and cultural enlightenment: natural studies and the evolutionary turn of *bowu*; 3) Visual spectacles and the politics of consumption: the ideology of gaze/novelty and viewing/consumption; 4) Cross-boundaries and displacement: cultural otherness and fetishization; 5) Cross-cultural flow and subject identity: value competition and cultural negotiation. The analysis will specifically focus on some images from the “Dianshizhai Pictorial” introducing objects of Western material culture, science and technology – such as self-ringing bells, hot air balloons, airships, sea cars, observation decks, running water, microscopes, X-rays, anti-corrosion, film, photography, specimen making, alchemy, and modern anatomy. Additionally, it will provide a global perspective on the narrative strategies of *bowu* about Europe, the United States, Japan, South Korea, Southeast Asia, and Africa. This research will help us better comprehend Chinese *bowu* politics in the context of translingual practices and multiple modernities.

Bettina Zorn (Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna)

Consul Haas’ Network for the Benefit of Chinese Collections Kept at Weltmuseum Wien, Austria, in the 19th Century

The Austrian-Hungarian Consul Josef Haas (1847–1896) played an active role as promoter of Chinese collections for Museum collections in Vienna. This paper will focus on his achievements for the anthropological-ethnographic department of the Imperial Natural History Museum, today Weltmuseum Wien, Austria. In 1866 Haas had been sent to Hong Kong for a language training in Chinese. He was engaged as interpreter for the trade treaty between the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy and the Chinese Empire. After 1883, then joining the diplomatic service in Shanghai and with his strong network of international experts from various fields as custom officers, journalists, technicians, missionaries, etc. he succeeded in encouraging these people to make donations to the Court Museum. These collections are now at Weltmuseum Wien. This paper will focus on his effort for the museum to acquire the collections through his network, he then forwarded to the museum. The paper tries to describe and characterize the different collections according to region and profession his informants lived.



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

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Antonie Angerer (University of Würzburg)

China's 'Rural Guardians': Platformisation of Rural Revitalisation Campaign

In many short videos posted on social media platform Douyin, the countryside is depicted as a place of longing and unused potential. A place promising an escape from the hardships and struggle of city life. This paper analyses a program on rural revitalisation on the short-video platform Douyin, the Rural Guardians (*xiangcun shouhuren* 乡村守护人), which is part of the larger 'Bytedance rural plan' started by the Bytedance charity foundation in 2021. Embedding the qualitative content analysis of videos in a wider discussion of the interests and strategies of major actors involved, it investigates how the linkages and entanglements between political and commercial actors have become an integral part in shaping the production of rural digital space as a space promoting both economic consumption and political mobilisation. By means of inclusion in the program, the well-known and widely liked rural nostalgia videos become framed as part of the ongoing rural development campaign promoting a new appreciation of the countryside and rural traditions, as well as a place of economic opportunities inviting the move of young educated urbanites, as well as the migrant population to return to the villages. In this 'platformisation of politics,' commercial platforms and government actors seem to work hand in hand in steering rural video production and dissemination towards both commercially and politically exploitable representations of the countryside.

Daniele Brombal (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Area Studies and the Relational Turn in Sustainability Science

Despite their heterogeneity, Area Studies (AS) have long been united by two common features: a widespread methodological promiscuity, being a field whose scientific toolbox consists of a bricolage of methods originated from different disciplines; and a relational logic, embodied by the long-term commitment of many AS scholars towards the places, cultures, and peoples they devote their efforts to. This commitment is at once emotional, epistemological, and ethical, and it is not rare to see it growing into a sense of responsibility and care. In the ultra-specialized science emerged in the XIX and XX centuries, these features were generally considered as shortcomings. Yet they have been recently rehabilitated in debates over the capacity of science to be rooted, socially responsive, and capable of promoting meaningful advancements for human civilization. This discussion has been particularly intense in the field of sustainability science, where a growing consensus has emerged on the need for a relational turn, strongly resonating with the transdisciplinary approach, self-reflexive capacity, and sensitivity to context commonly found in AS. Against this backdrop, my presentation highlights the potential of language-based AS to sustain the production of original and actionable knowledge, pushing the boundaries of sustainability transformations. The presentation draws from both literature and from the results of a co-creative workshop conducted with 12 PhD students at the Department of Asian and North African Studies of Ca' Foscari University in Spring 2023, aimed at redefining AS as an ethically conscious and socio-ecologically responsible practice.

Sergio Conti (Roma Tre University/Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Laura Locatelli, Pui Yiu SZETO and Daniele Brombal (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Novel Approaches to Eco-linguistics: Methodological Tools and their Application to Chinese Texts

Sustainability transformations call for a reconfiguration of mental models informing the way humans perceive and act upon the rest of nature. In fact, culture and morality lie at the core of the quest for more sustainable and just futures. Along this line of reasoning, a growing community of scholars and practitioners have been leveraging the role of language as a tool of social criticism and change, both to expose discourse informing and normalising destructive social practices and individual habits, and to explore alternative pathways of expression and action. This collective effort has crystallized into the field of ecolinguistics, which studies the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans with other species and the biophysical environment as a whole. In this presentation, we introduce a suite of methodological approaches developed at LAST Lab to identify, characterize, classify, and reshape environmental discourses. The core of such approaches consists in a framework of lexical indicators (C-LEDA, Chinese Language Ecological Discourse Analysis), designed to support a systematic analysis of Chinese texts of environmental relevance. By means of practical applications, in this presentation we share C-LEDA potential both for the purpose of qualitative and quantitative (corpus-based) analysis, as well as a guidance for a critical assessment and rewriting of environmental planning documents.

CUI Mengmeng (University of Lisbon/Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and Chiara Bartoletti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Exploring the Potential of Resistance for Sustainability Transformations. Insights from China's Alternative Food Practices

In recent years, the acknowledgment that more radical solutions are needed to tackle the triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change, and social justice has gained traction across practitioners and academics. Against this backdrop, political ecology has reinstated the potential of community resistance to counterbalance extractive patterns and their destructive impacts on people and nature. Yet the nexus between resistance and sustainability transformations remains largely unexplored. To address this gap, we have designed a novel analytical framework (REBASTA, Resistance-Based Transformative Alternative), to assist researchers and activists in comprehending the transformative capacity of resistance. In this presentation, we introduce findings from a test application of our framework to a case study on China's alternative food practices. The application focuses on a rural community in Yunnan and employs data from both ethnography fieldwork and secondary sources. Preliminary results show a remarkable presence of transformative elements, which brings hope about the possibility of meaningful processes of change in a field of vital importance, both within and beyond China. To what extent this potential may be actionable, scalable, and durable should be further investigated.

Florence Graezer Bideau (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne)

Intersecting Trajectories: Cultural Heritage Policies and Rural Revitalisation in China

This paper critically examines the dynamic interaction between cultural heritage policies and the rural revitalisation strategy in China. By scrutinising the governance of heritage over the past four decades, it illustrates how Chinese authorities and experts have established local norms and regulations to safeguard the heritage landscape, occasionally deviating from international programs or values. Initially designed for urban areas at the national, provincial and local levels, cultural heritage policies began focusing on the countryside in the early 2000s to preserve traditional villages as cultural relics. Furthermore, the paper explores how both cultural heritage and rural revitalisation policies contribute to a broader societal initiative aimed at nurturing and shaping new citizens and urban lifestyles. Despite rural China's cultural identity being perceived as a 'harmonious model,' it is still associated with backwardness, prompting a dual challenge of modernisation and development while preserving the valuable past. By drawing upon the Principles regarding rural landscapes as heritage (ICOMOS 2017) and subsequently putting into action the Rural Revitalisation Strategy (2018), China underwent an anthropological shift, now perceiving contemporary traditional village projects not only as constructed environments but also as living cultural entities. Through specific case studies, the paper will explore if these initiatives effectively bridge the urban-rural gap by directing urban resources to catalyse rural development, encompassing agriculture, rural tourism, and eco-museums. It will also assess whether retaining the local population on-site and preserving heritage are central objectives of these projects.

Lena Kaufmann (University of Fribourg)

Rural Revitalisation and Digitalisation: Competing Perspectives and Practices in Chinese Digital Agriculture

A key element of the Chinese Rural Revitalisation strategy involves the digitalisation of agricultural production. Digital farming technologies, outlined in major planning documents like Five-Year-Plans and the No. 1 Document, aim to bridge rural-urban income gaps, alleviate labour constraints resulting from rural-urban migration, and ensure food security and sustainability. Despite the clarity of policy direction, limited knowledge exists regarding how digital farming technologies manifest on the ground. Specifically, the socio-economic impacts on factors such as gender, age, employment opportunities, migration and return decisions, as well as farmer-state and farmer-industry relations, are yet to be explored. Addressing this gap, this paper adopts a bottom-up perspective on the evolving discourses and practices of rural revitalisation and digitalisation. Centred on the example of agricultural drones (UAVs), it highlights diverse actors involved in digital technology adoption, including the state, industry, farmers, and pilots. The paper argues that a disparity exists between the high-tech visions of policymakers and industry representatives and the actual experiences of farmers. Drawing on a systematic, qualitative analysis of national and local newspaper articles, policy documents, industry reports, and digital ethnography (e.g., drone forums and video materials), this paper establishes a foundation for future field research on the topic. More broadly, it complicates prior findings on peasant-state relationships by shedding new light on contemporary state-industry-farmer relations and divergent perspectives on digital technologies.

Fabienne Wallenwein (Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies)

Mountainous Agricultural Landscapes as Sites of Revitalisation: Reconciling Ethnic Tourism, Agribusiness and Heritage Conservation

From a heritage conservation perspective, the remote rice terrace landscapes in China's south-western provinces easily tempt their contemplators into conceiving of them as 'hidden gems' in a still rapidly urbanising environment. Since the country's heritage craze (Yan 2018) from the beginning of the 2000s, agricultural landscapes such as the Hani Rice Terraces World Heritage property in China's Yunnan Province experienced an impressive revaluation. Formerly associated with notions of backwardness, the landscape now not only appears in media representations much more frequently, but is highlighted for its 'living culture' and preserved traditional ecological knowledge. However, core problems including missing job opportunities to alleviate poverty in local villages remain largely unresolved. Based on textual sources and recent fieldwork in south-western China after the pandemic, this paper investigates how landscape conservation efforts may foster or impede rural revitalisation and entrepreneurship in remote regions. Given the above circumstances, how realistic are scenarios of return migration? As in many rural minority areas, authorities pursue ethnic tourism development as a strategy to boost the local economy. More recently, and not least due to lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, additional strategies gain importance that focus on conservation via establishing local brands of agricultural produce. What role do digital technologies play, such as the use of digital platforms to promote agricultural products or to inform on local heritage in live broadcasts? The paper further asks whether and how new physical and digital infrastructure reduces spatial distances from these remote landscapes to the domiciles of their target audiences.



ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

Monika Arnoštová (Duisburg-Essen University)

Navigating Shared Socialist Histories: A Comparative Analysis of White-Collar Workers' Overtime Behavior in Beijing and Prague

Given the shared socialist past of the People's Republic of China, as well as the Czech Republic, working culture and especially overtime behaviour in these two countries demonstrate several interesting convergencies and divergencies. Both countries have experienced rapid economic development since the 1990s, and have a high number of hard-working self-employed populations who typically work significantly longer hours than employed. Regulation of overtime in China and the Czech Republic does not demonstrate much divergence, however, the practice of long work hours is far more widespread and socially accepted in China. Due to shared socialist labour market experience, most men and women in both countries work full-time and attach much importance to social mobility. Other convergencies include overwork due to "always online" connectivity and overwork in the form of social activities which underpin one's position in society. Convergencies lie mainly in the protective behaviour of time spent with the family or on one's hobbies and a higher degree of protection of regular working hours in the Czech Republic. In addition, there strong emphasis of Czech workers related to various degrees of freedom in terms of working time and location, and perception of the normality of overtime and its inevitability by Chinese workers. This study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with white-collar workers in Beijing and Prague, conducted in 2016 and 2017 for a doctoral dissertation in the field of sociology at the Renmin University of China.

Yusheng BAI (Bonn University)

Memory of the Sage-King Shun and Reconstructing Social Norms in Contemporary Jiuyi Mountains, Hunan

The article investigates the function of Shun's image as a sage ruler and filial son in manifesting social norms in contemporary Xiangnan (southern Hunan) region. In Jiuyi Mountains, where the legendary sage-king Shun reportedly perished during his southern inspection tour, various forms of remembrance are dedicated to his memory, including promotion of "Culture of Shun (Shun wenhua)." Local elites, mainly officials, scholars and cultural experts, show renewed interests in interpreting and displaying the sagehood that Shun exemplifies, through aforementioned acts. The traditional knowledge of Shun find new resonance among the elites to promote desired behaviors and expected obligations for a new generation who live in a rapidly changing China. Specifically, I demonstrate the dynamic processes of discursive construction of "Culture of Shun," examining how these actors attribute meaning to memory of Shun and connect that remembering with specific norms and values, as evidenced in publications and remediated exhibition in local temple context. Shun's stories, surrounding his family relations, governing career and finally his mysterious death, are appropriated to substantialize the moral discourses. I conclude that cultural elites strive to pursue and maintain discursive authority in interpreting Shun's legacy, through drawing on classic references and align Shun related narratives with official policy.

Mikkel Bunkenborg (University of Copenhagen)

Fake Food, Fake News, and Operations of Qualification in Contemporary China

The point of departure for this paper is a 2017 social media video clip that claimed to expose the seaweed sold in Chinese supermarkets as a fake product. Widely circulated and re-enacted by different users, the video used the squeaky sound produced by rubbing the moist seaweed to convince consumers that it was actually made from black plastic bags. In this particular case, the accusation turned out to be a hoax started by a man with a grudge against a seaweed producer and he was apprehended shortly after the national sales of seaweed began to plummet. Yet videoclips exposing fake food are sufficiently numerous in China to constitute a genre in their own right and it frequently remains unclear if the video clips represent fake food or fake news. Focusing on the exposure of fake food as a genre, this article explores popular and governmental concern with fake food and the operations of qualification that are called for to expose fake food and fake news.

Ayesha Farooq Kisana (The University of Melbourne)

The Rising Trend of Temple Visiting Among Young Adults in China – Motivations and Significance of Religious Sites for Non-Religious Tourists

In recent years, temple visiting has emerged as a growing trend among young adults in China. Given the openly accessible temple sites across Chinese cities, temple visiting has become, more or less, an everyday tourist activity—motivating, relevant, and significant. But why is this practice of temple visiting becoming popular within a young generation which clearly does not associate with any religious group nor holds any coherent religious beliefs. Studies in religious tourism have increasingly captured the renewed interest in religious spaces by categorizing visitor motivations, at times, in specific and fixed categories and, at other times, in overlapping ones, however little attention has been paid to how such motivations emerge in specific cultural contexts. Much of the literature characterizes tourism motivations into generic, universal constructs without much thought to the local sociocultural changes that push non-religious people to visit religious sites. Taking Shanghai City God temple as its tourist setting, this study explores the motivations and significance of visiting temples for young adults by situating them within the recent sociocultural developments in local Chinese society. Identifying and constructing the narrative of temple visiting from the standpoint of young Chinese adults whose story up till now has not been comprehensively examined will not only offer a fresh take on the motivations of non-religious tourists but will also allow us to situate tourism motivations and experiences within particular religious and cultural circumstances; thereby providing an insightful look into the dynamics and workings of contemporary Chinese society.

Ryanne Flock (University of Würzburg)

Creating the Spectacular City in Everyday Life: A Governance Analysis of Urban Public Space in China

Chinese cities are making a name for themselves through what Guthman calls an ‘accumulation by spectacle.’ Studies elucidate the fast change of the urban fabric and the interconnection of commercial profits with pro-state propaganda during mega-events. The spectacle appears as a once-in-lifetime chance for a city, orchestrated during a specific time and in purpose-built venues. This article, however, argues that efforts of spectacularisation expand to everyday life. I take the marginalisation of the urban poor in Guangzhou, that is, street vendors and beggars, as a starting point to understand governmental ideals, strategies and patterns of controlling public space. The data is based on fieldwork, government documents, yearbooks and newspapers. Engaging in the discussion on what Debord termed the ‘society of the spectacle,’ I explain how urban management concentrates on areas serving (1) tourism and commerce, (2) memorial politics, (3) government relations and (4) transport and traffic; and follows the pulse of (1) annual events and seasonal holidays, (2) recurring political dates, (3) exceptional mega-events and (4) regular urban development campaigns. These zones and periods of increased control intertwine and culminate in an ‘ideal’ public space excluding poverty and other elements contesting the city’s success images.

Ryanne Flock (University of Würzburg)

“Our Homes Have Become More Comfortable” or: What Do Housing Statistics in Chinese Cities Really Tell Us?

This study examines the relationship between dwelling development and social change in the urban People’s Republic of China during the reform period. I analyse the statistics and categories of housing conditions in three censuses (2000, 2020, 2020) and the expenditure on housing consumption in China’s statistical yearbook (1987-2020). While China’s Internet Security Bureau is reviewing and restricting data transfers to foreign countries, this perspective on contemporary China is becoming more valuable. Referring to the sociology of dwelling (Häußermann & Siebel 1996; Reutlinger & Lingg 2020), I ask: How does housing structure society? Who lives with whom and how? I focus on living space and functions, intergenerational cohabitation and the technical progress that accompanies and modifies dwelling processes. While explaining how data categories follow China’s housing revolution and political interests, I triangulate the statistics with qualitative research findings, i.e., ethnographic studies of urban neighbourhoods in Shanghai and Guangzhou mainly conducted from 2009 to 2014 and in 2023. As I show how social change unfolds through the transformation of dwelling space, I argue for new tensions between anonymity versus collectivity and private versus public spaces in Chinese cities.

Sofia Gaspar, Carol WANG and Olga Cojocaru (CIES-Iscte, Lisbon)

The Role of Air Pollution in the Decision-Making Migration Process of Wealthy Citizens from China to Portugal

The relationship between international migration and air pollution in urban cities in China has become more prominent in the last few years. Environmental pollution in China is linked with its rapid economic growth, which led to environmental contamination, and an increase in diseases related to air, water, and soil pollution. Besides, the high levels of urbanisation in cities like Beijing and Shanghai is associated with the migration of wealthy families with children to Europe (amongst other places), in search of a better environment and healthy life pace. For some years now, Portugal has been receiving Chinese well-off families, who have settled in high-middle-class neighbourhoods in Lisbon and Oporto. However, the linkage between air pollution and decision-making related to migration is still rarely investigated. This paper wants to address this linkage as an important trigger in the decision-making process of Chinese families migrating to Portugal. Through the analysis of 25 semi-structured interviews with wealthy Chinese migrants settled in Portugal, our results reveal that air pollution and other related environmental problems were scarcely researched until so far as a motivation to migrate. At the core of the decision-making process of our participants was, particularly, the search for a healthy lifestyle and a relaxed (international) education for their children, for which they used ‘pragmatic’ mobility policies for a quick settlement in the country.

Piotr Gibas (College of Charleston)

To Eat the Island — “Native Harvest” and National Identity in Taiwan

“Native harvest” is a culinary trend that recently developed in Europe and in North America. Originally, it referred to foraging practices of Native Americans, whose diet consisted almost entirely of wild plants and game. The concept was adopted by modern chefs, who reinvent local cuisines by utilizing only natively sourced, but normally uneaten ingredients. In recent years, the practice of “native harvest” became a defining principle of contemporary foodways in Taiwan, where it reached an entirely new dimension. By exploring native resources available on the Island, Taiwanese chefs effectively reinvent the national cuisine and rethink what it means to be Taiwanese. The aim of Taiwanese “native harvest” is not only to eat locally, healthy, in season, and sustainably, and thus fight the global warming and other ecological challenges, but also to create a new, national, Taiwanese cuisine. Rather than merely exploiting their Island, “native harvest” is a way to cherish and celebrate it, to rediscover it, to save and sustain it. The Taiwanese may be constrained and limited by the Island, but therefore they learn how to be self-sufficient and environmentally conscious. By means of food, Taiwan is becoming a nation. Eating native food foments native consciousness and a distinct culinary and national identity. By “eating the island,” people become Taiwan.

Gilles Guiheux (Université Paris Cité)

A Comparative Perspective on China Labour Issues

The presentation will introduce a collective research program carried over the last 5 years by a group of historians and sociologists examining workers’ experiences in Japan, France and Belgium during the 30-year post-war boom and in China from the 1980s to the present day. The originality of the program is that it uses the conditions of Chinese workers as a starting point to revise the standard narrative on the homogenisation of incomes and lifestyles, embodied in the idea of a growing middle class, followed by the de-standardization of labour (Beck 1992; Castel 1995). The presentation will introduce how the comparison was carried in the two main outputs of the program: • a book to be published in 2024, Thomann B. & Guiheux G. (dir.), *Comparing Labor in Contemporary China and in Postwar Japan and France. Precariousness in High-Growth Economies* (Amsterdam University Press). The five chapters are not a succession of national case studies, but thematic analyses blending in-depth micro perspectives based on extensive fieldwork in China, France and Japan with broader perspectives mobilising historical and political economic thought. The five chapters focus on payslips, workers’ domestic economics, workers’ demand recognition, arenas of negotiations, religion and ethics in the world of business. • and an online exhibition entitled *Workers of the World: Lives, Bodies, Struggles* that gives visitors close insights into the reality of the working-class experiences. Visitors can access various written, audio, video, and image resources by exploring the three main sections (lives, bodies, struggles). See <http://workersoftheworld.uliege.be> and <http://experiencesouvrieres.uliege.be>.

Yu-Yin HSU (Ruhr University Bochum)

A Chinese Concept of Body Toning in Daily Life: An Analysis Based on the Diary Texts of an Intellectual in Colonial Taiwan

A Chinese concept of body toning in daily life: an analysis based on the diary texts of an intellectual in colonial Taiwan This study aims to examine changes in the concept of “bushen” 補身, which in Chinese means “to replenish the body with nutritious food or tonics.” This concept of body toning has also changed with the popularisation of health knowledge over time. By shifting the focus to Taiwanese figures who lived during the colonial period (1895-1945), a major conflict between modernity/tradition, medical science/ordinary habits, and Western/Oriental style becomes apparent. Analysing the innovations and controversies in the core concepts of body toning can help to better understand the emergence of health care at the time. Based on 30 years of diary texts written by Lin Xian-Tang 林獻堂 (1881-1956), this study discusses his concept of “bushen” and how it changed. Over the course of a year, he visited more than 15 countries in Southeast Asia, Europe and the United States. Rich records present his dietary ideas and even precious food experiences around the world. In this study, I first analyse how he practised the Bushen concept in his daily life. Second, through his dietary habits, food criticism and taboos, I transform textual information into visible graphs and forms with the help of technology. The case study expects to show this conceptual change through both the narratives and visible data.

Ke HUANG (Université Paris-Cité)

The Platformisation of Work and Its Consequences for Chinese Trade Unionism

Based on materials obtained from fieldwork in three Chinese cities (Xiamen, Shenzhen and Guangzhou) between April and October 2020 and data collected through online ethnography (between 2021 and 2023), this article investigates the relationship between Chinese trade unions and food delivery workers resisting the exploitation of platform capitalism. It is a contribution to the debate on the transformation of Chinese trade unionism (Chan & Hui 2012, 2014; Froissart 2018; Froissart et al. 2019; Franceschini & Lin 2019; Liu 2011; Périsse 2015). The article first analyzes the impact of the official character and structure of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) on its compatibility with couriers. Constrained by Chinese policies and regime, the ACFTU is absent from the collective action mobilization of couriers. Thus, it is shown that, by this absence, the Chinese couriers have opted for self-organization. However, while avoiding the role of mobilization, Chinese unions have responded and acted on the emergence of the couriers and the growth of their protest actions. As a result of these practices, some new union organizing patterns in platform capitalism have emerged in different regions. Whereas unions for platform workers, initially in the form of service stations, focused on providing welfare to workers, the actions of these unions are now shifting toward promoting collective bargaining. This article highlights that the ambiguous legal relationship between platforms and workers, the multiple outsourcing of Chinese platforms, and the geographical dispersion of outsourcing companies have challenged the ACFTU's traditional union organization patterns, with the result that special unions have been created at different levels for couriers by innovating beyond the established system, abandoning the tradition of employer-controlled "paper unions" and potentially gaining substantive bargaining power.

Amélie Keyser-Verreault (University of Tübingen)

Demographic Crisis in the Aftermath of Compressed Modernity: Young People's Reject of Parenthood

In the context of Taiwanese compressed modernity, for the sake of rapid industrialization, developmental state maximizes economic production by purposely sacrificing social reproduction. Yet, in post-compressed modernity condition (Chang 2022) marked by unstable employment status, low economic development, and various structural inequalities, for young people, building a family is increasingly seen as transmitters of social risks rather than of social resources. Taiwan has the world lowest birth rate and while precise demographic statistics document this trend, those fail to hear the voice of the people behind these numbers. In a patrilineal society in which carry on the family name is men's duty and motherhood is still strongly linked to feminine identity, how young adults (25-45 years old) what are the motivations behind their choice, and what life they aspire to for themselves? Based on 117 in-depth interviews with urban highly educated young adults, the findings reveal that those who actively decide to forgo children in favour of other life pursuits do so based on five major factors: economic considerations and lack of financial resources; for women, having children is seen as an unbearable burden resulting from the privatization and feminization of care work; the influence of the negative discourse about child raising that women get from their own mothers; young adult's pursuit of maximization of self-development and the refusal to compromise with others-directed duties; adverse effects of intergenerational comparison and of idealistic expectations of parenthood.

Amélie Keyser-Verreault (University of Tübingen)

Eating as a Way of Performing Gender: The Intersection of Food, Gender, and Human Capital in Taiwan

This paper seeks to inaugurate a discussion on the relationship between food and the quest for beauty in Taiwan's neoliberal context. Focusing on analyzing how women use specific ways of eating in performing gender, I draw on ethnographic work in Taiwan conducted between 2010 and 2023. My insights are drawn from Foucault's critique of the theory of human capital and his emphasis on how neoliberalism redefined individuals as "entrepreneurs" who attentively and constantly invest, manage, and improve their "human capital." I argue that beauty is a determinant part of women's human capital and therefore neoliberal subjects must continually carry out important aesthetic labor, including food-related practices, to keep their capital attractive. Consequently, it is important that women struggle to balance their eating habits and regulate their body weight. I also emphasized that the link between eating, womanhood, and managing one's embodied human capital is a continuous process of entrepreneurial tasks spanning adulthood, pregnancy, and motherhood.

Marius Korsnes, Dongming XU, and Yu WANG (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

The Embeddedness of Animal Foods in China's Agri-Food System: A Practice Lens

This study delves into the roles of meat and milk in contemporary urban food practices in China and their integration into the agri-food system. Urban eating habits are evolving amidst broader lifestyle changes, emphasising the significance of understanding the materials, meanings, and competencies associated with meat and milk consumption. Investigating the current roles of meat and milk in urban food practices, this paper explores how and why these roles have changed in response to shifting materials, meanings, and competencies. Eating in China is marked by an increase in dining out, fast food consumption, online food purchasing, and a shift from fresh to processed foods. The symbolic aspects of social status and position are intertwined with eating habits, shaped by nutritional advice from the government, including government guidelines emphasising lean meat consumption and the frequent intake of milk or dairy products. Rapid production growth, technological advancements in processing and packaging, and a shift from small-scale to industrialised farming clearly shape China's surge in consumption of animal foods. Although urbanisation and increased income correlate with heightened consumption of animal-based products, the underlying factors are complex, influenced by industrialisation trends, government policies favouring large-scale farms, and global implications such as the extensive cultivation of soybeans in North and South America to feed Chinese livestock. With a holistic perspective, this paper sheds light on how contemporary demand for animal-based foods is co-shaped by systems of provision in the context of China's evolving food practices.

Martin Lavička (Palacký University Olomouc/Lund University)

Socialist Rule of Law with Chinese Characteristics and its Implications for XUAR

China's "socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics" represents a unique approach to legal governance that departs from the liberal democratic model. This distinctive ideology, rooted in socialist principles and Chinese realities, grants paramount authority to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in interpreting and enforcing laws, placing its policies and decisions above all other legal norms. This deviation raises concerns about the compatibility of China's approach with universal human rights standards and its potential impact on global governance. This presentation examines the governmental policy and implementation of the socialist rule of law in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), focusing on recent lawmaking and legal enforcement developments. By utilising a content analysis of relevant policy documents and normative texts, the presentation delves into the specific strategies employed in the XUAR to promote social harmony, economic development, and national security under the socialist rule of law framework. The presentation concludes by critically evaluating the implications of China's approach to the rule of law in the XUAR, particularly concerning human rights protections and its broader global impact.

Shichong LI (University of Leeds)

Practising Renqing, Guanxi and Mianzi: Chinese Children's Relational Agency in Peer Relationships

In Confucian ethics, *renqing* can be translated in English as norms of interpersonal relationships or the ways of the world. Doing *renqing* is normally recognized as the first step for Chinese people to achieve certain life goals and work things out. Within the Confucian ethics of *renqing*, *guanxi* (enduring social networks) and *mianzi* (face) are key concepts that mostly researched in Chinese business studies. However, children's learning of Confucian ethics from their own perspectives lacks attention within the field of Chinese studies. Meanwhile, Chinese children's agency (competence and capacity to take initiative), particularly their practice of relational agency in interpersonal relationships were also under-researched in the field of Chinese childhood. As being influenced by what one constantly sees and hears, it is assumed that adults' daily practice of Confucian ethics must have an impact on children's social encounters with peers. Hence, this paper aims to reveal children's presentations of Confucian ethics in their daily social lives with their peers. Based on data collected for my PhD project, it has been proven that: 1) Chinese children can practice *renqing* with peers. They use their *renqing* to ask for help from friends to prevent punishment from teachers. 2) They go after profits and avoid disadvantages when they recognize their peers' value in certain social conditions. 3) They preserve their *mianzi* (face) by doing things that were certain in peer competition. 4) They hide their opinions considering other's *mianzi* and their *guanxi* with others. All of the above have demonstrated children's relational agency in practising *renqing*, *mianzi* and *guanxi* with peers in their social lives in the Chinese context. Contextualizing Chinese children's relational agency is also imperative when expanding the meaning of children's agency.

Ruoxi LIU (University of Cambridge)

Alternative Practices of the Independent Cultural Workers in China: A Study of Its Practices, Features, and Meaning Through the Case of Guangzhou

I began my six-month ethnography (from September 2020 to April 2021) among Chinese independent cultural workers by examining how they negotiated both the market economy and an increasingly rigid authoritarian state. Having conducted participant observations, in-depth interviews, and diary methods in Guangzhou, I found that the current generation of self-employed cultural workers has developed alternative practices and tactics; these emerging practices are non-subversive, passively resistant, and transcend traditional concepts of social and cultural activism. In particular, their cultural work, communal spaces, daily practices, and mobility-seeking practices are decentralised. I highlight the alternative-seeking of these practices and argue that it is different from cultural activism for being implicit and subtle. Their alternative-seeking is a response to increasing state censorship and the precarities of a Chinese labour market that has neoliberal characteristics. In addition, by developing alternatives throughout their self-employment practices, independent cultural workers in Chinese cities have devised alternative work- and lifestyles that emphasise decentralisation, everydayness, mobility, and transnationality. Specifically, the implicit activism and mobility-seeking embedded in their alternative-seeking is passively resistant to the new social normality – neo-liberalism in state-dominated narratives. The everydayness and non-productivity of their alternative-seeking contribute to the long-term (re)empowering of self-employed cultural workers and revitalising of their communities. This study also refreshes the understanding of the cultural ‘independents,’ who situate in between the creative labour and the cultural activists.

Michael Malzer (University of Würzburg)

“English Corners” in Yinchuan – Islands of Meaning-Making and Social Worlds In and Beyond Everyday Life

In this paper I analyze so-called “English Corners” in Yinchuan, capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous region in Northwest China. English Corners in the Chinese context are semi-regular, semi-regulated and semi-public formats of social interaction in the English language, often held in cafés or similar establishments. Yinchuan is classified as a third-tier city within China’s informal urban hierarchy and is often perceived as rather remote and peripheral in relation to the more developed and international cities in the east of the country. I conducted participant observation in a total of twenty-four “English Corner” sessions during my six-months field stay in 2019, as well as in-depth narrative interviews with several participants, some of whom I also met again during a follow up visit in 2023. Based on this data, I show how strategies of individual self-improvement and aspirations to connect to a modern and globalized sphere can form a social world which provides a source of group identity, an escape from everyday pressure and a limited public sphere where societal questions can be discussed.

Mieke Matthyssen (Ghent University)

Navigating Life and the Role of Ming-Fate 命 in Psychological Wellbeing in Contemporary China: A Proverbial Approach

The concept of *ming* 命, encompassing notions of fate, destiny, and life, holds profound significance in both Chinese intellectual history and daily life. With as starting point a variety of old and modern proverbs containing *ming*, and through a multidisciplinary approach integrating interviews, literary sources, digital ethnography, and philosophical analysis, this paper explores the role of *ming* as a catalyst for psychological wellbeing in contemporary Chinese society. The use of *ming*-related expressions in daily life illustrates how individuals perceive and engage with fate as a fundamental agent in their lives. The paper will show that dealing with *ming* on the one hand involves surrendering to the inevitability of one’s personal *ming*-fate, fostering inner peace and reduced anxiety while accepting that certain life events are beyond one’s control. Conversely, a strong belief persists in the capacity to change one’s *ming*-fate through personal agency, covering pursuits such as education, career advancement, and lifestyle changes. Moreover, referring to *ming* often pragmatically serves as a post factum way of infusing meaning and coherence into – often unfortunate - life events and life narratives. This retrospective framing of events provides consolation and meaning, and contributes to overall psychological balance when navigating life’s uncertainties. Altogether, these dimensions of *ming* all have a role in strengthening mental and emotional resilience in contemporary China, at the same time exemplify the dynamics between tradition and modernity.

Marius Meinhof (Bielefeld University/Dresden University of Technology)

Constructing the Filial Self – Defining and Negotiating Filial Piety Between State Discourse and Popular Online Debates in Contemporary China

My presentation will depict debates about the understanding of filial piety (*xiao*) in public discourse in China. State discourse depicts *xiao* as “traditional virtues” that should be promoted in moral construction programs as part of an overall project of modernization and civilization. However, the definition of filial piety and the obligations connected to it are contested, and heterogeneous actors fill the somewhat vague demands for moral construction with different imaginations about “tradition” and “modernity.” This leaves some space for authors to negotiate their generational obligations, and to use the debates about *xiao* to question certain generational and gender-related norms, as well as the boundaries of kinship-obligations. Author contesting the notion of *xiao* can draw from heterogeneous classic texts as well as from a somewhat contradictory state discourse on modernization, backwardness and tradition, in order to find authoritative statements that support their specific interpretation of filial piety. Thus, *xiao* remains an important concept in China, but rather than a fixed cultural norm, *xiao* seems a vaguely defined signifier for a contested discourse on generational relations, kinship obligations, gender-roles and more general about modernity and Chinese identity.

David O’Brien and Melissa Shani Brown (Jagellonian University)

The Symbols Used and (Bedtime) Stories Told: Children’s Media and Chinese Political Propaganda

Though there have been various challenges for the CCP, predominantly “the symbols used and stories told” (Brady quoted in Brown and O’Brien 2019) in domestic media have largely enabled them to maintain widespread legitimacy. Conversely, the extent to which externally-directed propaganda (exoprop) manages to impact foreign populations’ opinions, particularly on geopolitical issues and current events, is a matter of ongoing debate. Most research, however, has focused on media tacitly aimed at adults. In this paper we turn to several of China Daily’s short videos – such as the ‘Belt and Road Bedtime Stories’ and ‘Sing-along’ series – clearly targeting young English-speaking children. Disseminated on external platforms such as China Daily’s Youtube channel, these are an innovative use of children’s non-fiction media to depict current events and political agendas. Methodologically, we offer textual analysis of the videos, and thematic analysis of online comments, but also draw on interviews with young children, as well as their parents. While scholars have identified that the CCP’s highly simplified narratives, such as the casting of the BRI as a largely altruistic endeavour, China’s ‘gift’ to the world, regularly jar with external adult populations’ scepticism around China’s geopolitical aims (see Mayer 2018; Freymann 2021), could such simple narratives be more effective in children’s media? While a seven-year-old may have little say in global politics now, to be able to sculpt children’s perceptions of the world is to influence the political terrains of the future.

Megan Robertson (University of Edinburgh)

Bridewealth Negotiations: A True Test of Love

Based on ethnographic research conducted from the beginning of 2023 with “new generation” (those born after 1980) (Li 2020) middle-class and above couples working and living in tier-1 cities, this paper will explore how bridewealth 彩礼 (*caili*) is negotiated in urban contemporary society. Bridewealth, typically recognised as a transfer of assets from the groom’s family to the bride’s family around the time of marriage (Goody 1973), is still commonplace in China today and is negotiated as part of a wider set of exchanges that includes the dowry and marital gifts (Yan 2009: 158; Liang 2021). In recent years, the practice has gained a great deal of attention and is often the source of great controversy on popular social media sites such as Weibo (Shuang 2021; Xue and Rose 2021), often linked to low marriage and birth rates and leading to heated discussions about the roles and pressures of men and women in contemporary Chinese society. Focusing on the subjective intimate lives and inter-relational emotional ties of individuals involved in negotiating the practice, this paper argues that bridewealth is much more than a financial transfer from the groom’s parents to the new conjugal family and that bridewealth is an important mechanism of showing respect and expressing love between couples and across generations.

Eva Salerno (Institute Catholique de Paris)

From Taiwan to Chinese Parishes in Europe. Introduction of Ancestor Veneration in a Catholic Context

Chinese Catholic communities began to officially establish themselves within European dioceses from the 1950s-1960s. In Paris, the diocese's Mission Catholique Chinoise was founded in 1954, while the creation of the Missione con cura d'anime for Chinese migrants living in the diocese of Rome dates back to 1968. These dioceses, like others after them, aimed in this way to formalise the existence of groups of Chinese Catholics already present in their area for a long time. By studying the practice of the Catholic religion by the Chinese believers in Europe, rituals specific to Chinese culture can be observed, such as ancestor veneration. An expression of filial piety towards the deceased, this ritual developed in the Catholic context following the process of inculturation encouraged by the Church after the Second Vatican Council. It first appeared in Taiwan and then spread to Chinese parishes in the diaspora. Based on multi-year fieldwork in several Chinese Catholic communities in Europe, as well as ethnographic and bibliographic research on Catholicism in Taiwan, this presentation aims to explore the links between the rite of ancestor veneration practised by Taiwanese Catholics and the ritual that has developed in Chinese parishes in Europe. This study examines the construction of a Chinese Catholic identity through the adoption of specific cultural traits, particularly within parishes that are very diverse in terms of the origins and migratory backgrounds of their members.

Taru Salmenkari (University of Helsinki)

Social Ties Inside, Between, and Beyond Chinese NGOs

The liberal civil society paradigm champions overlapping memberships in voluntary organizations and thin social ties between people who choose their causes individually. Theoretically, Confucian affinity-based hierarchic relations appear to be in many ways anomalous to civil society values based on the ideas of equality, individualism and openness. However, Chinese advocacy NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) often benefit from Confucian social ties that defy these expectations. One explanation could be social capital that suggests that too thin social ties may not be enough for a vibrant civil society, as social cohesion matters. The unexpected mix may indicate how globalization works. According to the anthropology of globalization, glocalization, translation, hybridization, or friction transforms global ideas when they are being adapted to practice. This paper uses Confucian insights about personal ties to make visible how Chinese NGOs build social networks, which benefit them in advocacy and in spreading their message in society. Standard Confucian relationships in family, between the teacher and the student, and between friends are all at use. Networks based on personal introductions, shared background or long-term trust between Chinese NGOs and others beyond the NGO scene flourish and are proven useful with the government and other relevant actors.

Grete Schönebeck (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Contemporary Children's Graves in China: Strategies of Remembering the Unfilial Child and Doing Family

The death of one's child is a terrible experience for every parent. However, culturally acknowledged ways of expressing grief differ. In China, dying before one's own parents is considered unfilial (不孝 *bu xiao*). In traditional China, no graves would be built for dead, unmarried children. So, in some areas, young single adults would be married post mortem to at least have the chance to rest in a couple's grave. This practice is considered superstitious and at the same time not very feasible in big, anonymous cities today. At the same time, bereaved parents, especially those who lost their single-child (失独父母 *shidu fumu*) hope to maintain a bond with their dead child. In this paper children's graves from cemeteries in Shanghai and other places in China are being analysed to explore how bereaved parents balance their personal needs with societal expectations. It is shown that they do so by choosing personalised graves to bury their offspring. Different degrees of individualisation as well as the combination of the grave with other relative's graves (like those of grandparents or parents' future burial slot) reflect the child's role in the family transcending the traditional role of the descendant that produces the family's next generations.

Gina Song Lopez (Lund University)

Going Plant-Forward: Sustainable Diets, Plant-Based Foods, and the New Faces of Veganism in China

As China's meat consumption rises, the need to re-direct the menu toward more sustainable, healthier, and compassionate choices is becoming increasingly pressing. In the midst of a challenging socio-cultural setting where animal meat reigns supreme, a variety of actors are coming under the umbrella of what can be conceptualized as 'plant-forward' food advocacy. A term that has been gaining traction among dietary transition circles in recent years. In the context of China, the actors involved in these efforts constitute a heterogeneous ecosystem of both informal networks and official NGOs conducting work that entails part rediscovery of food traditions, part-meatless food exploration, part food-education, and part future-looking food innovation. This paper draws from a hybrid ethnographic approach combining both onsite and online participant observation to tell a story about food-focused civil society in China today. One that from casual veg*n meetups at local restaurants, to massive online food summits with international figures, is trying to change Chinese meals with more plants and less meat one plate at a time.

Rune Steenberg (Palacký University Olomouc)

An Uyghur Modernity, Morality and Social Thought in the Writing of Uyghur Intellectuals

The violence in Ürümchi in 2009 proved a pivotal moment in Uyghur socio-cultural development. The failure of the Chinese state to protect and provide justice for its Uyghur citizens led to their alienation and spurred diverse strategies of how to process and react to this experience. Some Uyghurs turned to religion and piety, others to ethno-nationalism and the invention of tradition. Common for many was their loss of belief in the state vision of a just and developed Chinese society with space and place for Uyghurs. It invigorated the ongoing quest among Uyghurs for an Uyghur Modernity, an alternative to Sinification and a type of contemporary, though partial de-colonisation. Some sought inspiration in the West, some in the Islamic world. All did seek to define new moral standards and to engage with the world outside China. This paper traces threads of 21st-century Uyghur intellectual discourse about how to be a good person on the margins of a rapidly transforming society. It traces imaginaries of what an Uyghur Modernity could look like. It conducts narrative and concept analyses of travel literature of Uyghurs studying abroad, social thought essays, and a number of debates on modernity carried out in Uyghur language journals and talk shows by intellectuals, many of whom are today incarcerated.

Ute Wallenböck (Masaryk University)

Tsampa: Tibetan Non-Violent Resistance Through Food

My paper explores the multifaceted role of tsampa, roasted barley flour, a traditional Tibetan staple food, as a symbol of non-violent resistance in the face of political and cultural challenges. In 1952, in *The Tibet Mirror*, the term “Tsampa eater” for Tibetans appeared the first time, claiming tsampa being a uniting factor in the construction of Tibetanness. And as part of the Tibetan identity, tsampa became a cultural ambassador, fostering understanding and appreciation for Tibetan traditions even beyond the borders of Tibet. Moreover, Tibetans with a variety of chronic health issues often resort to eating only tsampa instead a combination of purchased foods (i.e. rice, vegetables) and self-produced foods, perceiving tsampa as medicinal due to its uncontaminated quality and nutritious value. By consuming “pure” and “nutritious” Tibetan tsampa, Tibetans consciously distinguish themselves from non-Tibetans and cultivate a sense of “superiority,” just as they feel more fortunate as believers of Buddhism than non-believers. By examining the cultural, spiritual, nutritional, and socio-political dimensions of tsampa and its consumption, the paper aims to showcase how this simple food item transforms into a form of peaceful resistance against external influences. Tsampa transcends its culinary significance to become a powerful tool for expressing Tibetan identity and resilience. My findings are based on fieldworks in Tibetan areas within the People’s Republic of China between 1995 and 2017 and among the Tibetan communities in Switzerland since 2020, as well as on literature review and analysis of social media platforms.

Chongyun XIE (ENS Paris-Saclay)

Flowers, Romance and the Sprout of the Chinese “Emotional Self”

By analyzing articles on flower consumption in the Shanghai press of the late twentieth century, we find the sprout of the Chinese “emotional self” in the glocalization of Western holidays. After the Chinese economic reform, flower-gifting was revived in Shanghai, mediated by foreign corporate white-collar workers who practised Western festivals, represented by Valentine’s Day. It highlights a twofold change in Chinese social relations and “rules of feeling” (Hochschild 1983), the sentimentalization of traditional social etiquette and the culturalization of intimacy accompanying the commodification of emotions. Among the emerging intimate relationships, romantic love received the most media attention and was actively practised by youth. Bouquets became not only their courting devices but also means married people used to (re)create love. Positive press reports on flower-giving suggest a loss of legitimacy for the socialist and Confucian rules of feeling, which once repressed intimacy and individual emotions. However, the Chinese have yet to embrace individualistic romance totally. In the popular culture of bouquet-gifting, an ostentatious potlatch-like practice has formed based on the “mianzi” tradition. This trend prompted journalists to question the authenticity of love. In this case, we support the “sprout” of the Chinese emotional self at the turn of the century, accompanied by the formation of a rule of feeling that lies between the “regime of performativity of emotions” and the “regime of emotional authenticity” (Illouz 2012). This study thus develops the theme of individualization in Chinese society at the cultural and subjective level, which is confined to the structural level.

Kailing XIE (University of Birmingham) and Chong LIU (University of Leeds)

Popular Perspectives on Child Marriage in Contemporary China: Exploring Educational Implications

Despite the ostensible ban of child marriage and a legal marriage age of 22 for men and 20 for women, child marriage continues to be a silent yet not uncommon existence across China. Analysis of the 2000 and 2010 censuses reveals its increased prevalence across mainland China (Fan et al. 2022). However, institutional support for the promotion of evidence-based sexuality education remains inadequate. In UNICEF (2023, 2016) reports, Chinese data on child marriage is often labelled as ‘unavailable.’ The illegality of the practice also further limits the access to the affected individuals, resulting in a significant research gap in understanding the true extent of child marriage and its implications on the ground. This paper delves into one rare occasion when child marriage surfaced in public debate. In 2021, *Beijing Youth Daily*, an official press of the party-state, ran a story that a schoolteacher was invited to attend his Year 5 (around 12 years old) student’s wedding ceremony, which sparked close to 1,300 comments online within days. Through critical discourse analysis of these comments, this paper identifies common themes to reveal the popular perceptions of this practice in China today. It interrogates the complex power dynamics intersecting across China’s gender, rural-urban, economic and education divides that justify, conceal, and sustain such practice. Grounded in a context-specific understanding of this practice, this paper offers valuable insights into potential pathways to address child marriage within China’s contemporary cultural, economic, and political landscape, while advocating the importance of implementing evidence-based sexuality education.

Kailing XIE (University of Birmingham) and Yunyun ZHOU (University of Oslo)

Tokophobia as Feminist Resistance? Female Netizens’ Reproductive Experiences and Discourses in China’s Cyberspace

In response to the ‘population crisis’ characterized by a declining birth rate and rapidly aging population, the Chinese government has implemented pro-natalist policies since 2016, encouraging married couples to have more children. Despite these efforts, the state’s support for maternity and child-care remains insufficient. The prevailing essentialist gender discourse in China further normalizes motherhood, giving rise to the phenomenon of ‘widow-style childrearing,’ marked by limited paternal involvement. This raises questions about how contemporary Chinese young women navigate reproductive dilemmas, grappling with both the fear of missing out and the anxiety of potential overwhelm. To explore these issues, we compiled a dataset of 3153 posts from Douban, a popular forum among China’s young urban women, under the topic ‘What does reproduction mean to women?’ spanning from March 2020 to June 2022. Through systematic analysis of the theme-coded dataset, we identified a prevailing trend in discussions that bring attention to women previously overlooked bodily experiences and emotional challenges during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. Notably, these narratives sharply contrast with the traditional discourse of sacrificial motherhood, which tends to prioritize women’s roles as mothers over their individual experiences and subjectivity. We examine how young Chinese women respond to reproductive challenges by exchanging knowledge and ideas about the often stigmatized and silenced topic of women’s reproductive experiences. We discern the ‘undoing family’ potentials within these online discussions, as women make conscious choices that deviate from conventional family norms, thereby transforming their self-perceptions and the future of Chinese family.

Yiming ZHANG (Bielefeld University)

Heteronormativity in/of Space: An Ethnographic Study of a Certification Room in an Urban Marriage Registry in Southwest China

Empirical research on heteronormativity has largely been framed in terms of how it is challenged, with limited systematic exploration of the intricacies of its occurrence. This paper uses a boundary-folding framework to examine the ongoing diversification of boundaries in the space production of heteronormativity across the Chinese marriage registry. It is informed by a qualitative study with comparative observation of the placement of 6 urban marriage registries and an 8-month ethnography of one urban marriage registry in southwest China. This research elucidates that heteronormativity, within the confines of marriage registries, undergoes not only formation and reinforcement but also adjustments and resistance. Multiple actions in the marriage registry contribute to the folding, refolding, and unfolding of boundaries. The government underscores the moral traditions and legal legitimacy of heterosexual marriage under the authority of the state and parents by making boundaries. Local organizations concentrate on family intimate relationships and adjust the rules and boundaries of certification rooms, thereby strengthening the gender binary. Citizens exhibit spatial behaviors of refuser, enhancer, and rule-bender within the certification room, dynamically influencing the normativity of heterosexual marriages. This paper contributes to gender and space sociology by highlighting the heterogeneity within heteronormative spaces and its impact on mindsets of gender and marriage.

Qijun ZHENG (EPHE, Paris)

Sacred Seals: Daoist Ritual Sigillation in Maoshan

This study explores the historical evolution, cultural significance, and multifaceted roles of Daoist seals, particularly in the Jiangnan region of China, providing insights into the intricate interplay between religious material culture and socio-religious dynamics in late imperial China. With an interdisciplinary approach, it combines historical anthropology, textual studies, and visual analysis to explore the complex relationship between these sacred seals and the broader socio-political and economic landscapes of the time. Daoist seals, extending beyond mere tools of authentication, are revealed as objects deeply imbued with religious significance. This research traces the development of these seals through diverse designs and functions, including their early protective uses in medieval times, through their embodiment of royal patronage and representation in religious patriarchal succession, to their integration into funeral ritual practices. Moreover, the study examines the economic and cultural impact of these seals in late imperial China. It focuses particularly on their use in stamping pilgrims' incense bags and their role as a source of income for the Daoist community. The investigation into the state regulations and ensuing confiscation of these seals uncovers the dynamic relationship between religious practices and state control. By presenting a comprehensive historical account of the ritual seals used in the Daoist sacred mountain Maoshan, the research hopes to offer insights into the Daoist material culture through the lens of the religious history of China.



DIGITAL HUMANITIES

DIGITAL HUMANITIES

Victoria Almonte (Tuscia University) and Ileana Amadei (Sapienza University of Rome)

From Ancient Sources to New Resources: The Chinese Toponyms Database

Every digital tool is developed to answer specific questions or needs. This case applies also to humanities research and its digital forms. The Chinese Toponyms Database (<https://www.chinesetonyms.com>) – which collects toponyms in the Chinese language found in ancient geographical sources regarding non-Chinese territories – was thus created aiming not only to ease the access to geographical data scattered in different texts but also to make it possible for researchers to track the evolution of Chinese knowledge on foreign countries over the centuries. At present, the database focuses on five geographical works written under the Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties. It covers the vast area from the South China Sea to the coasts of Africa, as described in those sources, and covers three centuries of expanding trade routes and naval expeditions (the earliest selected work is from 1178 while the latest is from 1451). Even though it is far from being an exhaustive representation of the Chinese knowledge of foreign countries, it can be considered a first but significant step. The present contribution will present the database and its sources, highlighting its current features and future developments. The authors will show both how the passive fruition and the active interaction work, since users can actively participate in the implementation and development of the project, according to their capabilities and academic profiles.

Tilman Schalmey and Kristin Shi-Kupfer (Trier University)

Decoupling or Alignment in Digital Debates? Analyzing Short- and Mid-Term Topical Trends on the Chinese Q&A Platform Zhihu

The popularity of social media topics are one important marker of interests and sentiments among their user base, reflecting broader trends of alignment and fragmentation within a society at large. Analyzing topical trends on digital debates on Chinese social media is particularly interesting for several reasons: lack of alternative spaces for societal debates within the People's Republic of China (PRC), increasing censorship as well as ideational decoupling from “Western”/global discourses (e.g. in human rights). This paper analyzes topical trends on the Chinese Q&A platform Zhihu. Zhihu is China's most diverse and popular online platform to debate current affairs, serving as a nexus for knowledge exchange, opinions, and cultural reflections. Using a mixed methods approach from corpus linguistics as well computational social science, we explore mid- and short-term shifts in topics across a timeframe of one year. Our study is based on a corpus of Zhihu hotlist questions using a weekly aggregated temporal model. Using Google trends as a reference for global topics, we assess the extent to which Zhihu's top keywords are linked to international topical trends or are indicative of a decoupling from global debates. While we are aiming to provide insights into the evolving dynamics of the Chinese social media sphere, this analysis also contributes to the broader understanding of the interconnectedness or divergence of online conversations worldwide.

Mayya Solonina (Trier University)

Exploring Taiwanese Perceptions of Southeast Asian Migration: An Online Forum Analysis

With the increased migration from the South-East Asia to Taiwan, more Taiwanese people are coming into the contact with the migrants from the South-East Asia on the daily basis. 2020 was the first year when Taiwan's death rate was higher than the birth rate, meaning that soon there will be even less people who are able to work. While Taiwanese government is promoting migration to face this issue, Taiwanese people themselves express various opinions regarding the trend of increased South-East Asia migration. The aim of this paper is to shed a light the different opinions that are expressed by the Taiwanese population on the topic of Southeast Asian migration on the Internet. I aim to mainly use two of the most popular Taiwanese Bulletin Board System (BBS) platforms PTT and DCard for my research. I conducted an analysis of posts from these forums between 2023 and 2024, considering post content, types, likes, dislikes, and sentiment. While the main objective of this paper is to understand how people react to this social phenomenon, this research can also be beneficial for both Southeast Asian migrants coming to Taiwan and for evaluating the success of the governmental policies.

ZHANG Yuanjie (EPHE, Paris)

Applying Digital Humanities to Dianshizhai Pictorial: A Comprehensive Analytical Approach

This research focus on digital humanities methodologies to analyze the Dianshizhai Pictorial, a seminal artifact from the Late Qing era, renowned for its vivid depiction of Chinese life and culture. The Dianshizhai Pictorial uniquely combines traditional Chinese artistry with Western painting techniques, presenting a rich tapestry of cultural narratives and artistic expressions. This study utilizes advanced digital tools, including image processing, data analytics, and machine learning algorithms, to systematically dissect and interpret the content and stylistic elements of the pictorial. The paper addresses the intricate challenges of applying digital techniques to art that embodies a fusion of diverse cultural and artistic paradigms. Special emphasis is placed on developing innovative computational methods to analyze the varying artistic styles and techniques contributed by the numerous artists involved in the Dianshizhai Pictorial. The research integrates theoretical perspectives from cultural hybridity and visual semiotics, providing deeper insights into the digitization and interpretation of these complex artworks. The findings illuminate the potential of digital humanities in offering new perspectives on traditional art forms, advocating for the creation of specialized, adaptive methodologies for the effective analysis of such intricate and culturally significant artifacts.



MUSIC, MEDIA, AND THE PERFORMING ARTS

MUSIC, MEDIA, AND THE PERFORMING ARTS

Liping BAI (Lingnan University)

The Journey of the “Chinese Hamlet” from Stratford-upon-Avon to the Chinese Musical Stage

The Orphan of Zhao, written by Ji Junxiang during the Yuan Dynasty, is an epic tale of revenge, loyalty, and sacrifice. It takes its inspiration from historical events during the Spring and Autumn Period, recorded in Chinese classics like *Chunqiu*, *Zuo zhuan*, and *Shiji*. Known as the Chinese *Hamlet*, Ji's *The Orphan of Zhao* was the first Chinese play translated into Western languages. This influential tale has served as a source of inspiration for countless playwrights and theatergoers over centuries, resulting in numerous adaptations and reinterpretations worldwide. Between May 2021 and April 2023, a musical adaptation of *The Orphan of Zhao* captivated audiences in many cities across China, receiving wide acclaim and enthusiastic reviews. Intriguingly, this musical adaptation was not based on Ji's original Chinese version but on a British adaptation by the British poet James Fenton, performed at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon from November 2012 to March 2013. The conversion of Fenton's version into a Chinese musical is a significant event in the realm of East-West cultural exchanges, raising both theoretical and practical questions warranting scholarly investigation. This paper aims to delve into why Xu Jun, the director of the musical, chose to adapt Fenton's version and examine the journey from Fenton's adaptation to its Chinese rendition co-translated by Jin Sheng Hwa and Perng Ching-Hsi and finally to Xu Jun's musical adaptation. This research aims to illuminate the complex processes involved in cross-cultural translation and adaptation, providing insights on transnational transmissions in intercultural theatre.

Aurélien Bellucci (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

Reenacting the Umbrella Movement: People's Theater and People's Protest in Hong Kong

At the EACS 2024 Conference in Tallinn, I plan to present a paper drawn from a dissertation chapter on Hong Kong political performances within the 2019-2020 protests. The concept of “political performance” I resort to in my research goes beyond the performing arts to encompass political protests, and my paper will focus on a young artist's performance, Chung Siu Hei's *In Search of Our Common Ground*, which deals with the demonstrations on the restive island and, somehow, keeps them alive in a variety of locations, including a Zurich performance I attended in person in 2021, as well as online performances that attract intercontinental audiences through new technological means, connects them, makes them active and interactive. Through close reading, performance analysis, and interviews, I situate *In Search of Our Common Ground* within a longer tradition of Chinese political theater that starts with *Put Down Your Whip* in 1931 and other street plays, or *jietouju*, that sought audience involvement. My objective is not only to shed a new light on the Hong Kong events through original, artistic material that is often overlooked by the social sciences but also to show how it speaks to other political performances happening elsewhere in the world, particularly Indian people's theater, or *log natak*, or political plays from Europe in the traditions of both Bertolt Brecht and French *théâtre populaire*. Ultimately, I will show that a hybrid, interactive performance à la Chung Siu Hei may inform contemporary debates in the social sciences on the concept of democracy.

Andreea Chiriță (University of Bucharest)

The Aesthetic of Conscious Decolonization: Contemporary Chinese Theatre in Paper Tiger Studio's Performance Practice

This paper explores contemporary Chinese director Tian Gebing's theoretical articulation of the concept of “transcultural theatre” through his own understanding of postcolonialism. As artistic director of Beijing-/Berlin-based performance collective Paper Tiger Studio, Tian defines the group's transcultural aesthetic practice as a form of “postcolonial theatre,” one engaged with what he considers to be a process of the “conscious decolonization” of Chinese theatre from “Western theatre's cultural dominance.” Purposely engaging with Foucault's concept of “heterotopia,” for example, Tian reinterprets and transforms (or indeed “translates”) a number of the French theorist's ideas into what he describes as “a new theatre language,” which “remixes the world” and thereby re-balances Sino-European cultural encounters from a position of equality. Building on Tian's ideas, I argue that his definitions of transculturality dilute postcolonial binaries of hegemony-submission and centre-marginalization—effectively emphasizing the common ground that draws together seemingly disparate cultures interacting on stage. Furthermore, moving from theory to praxis, I examine how Tian's theoretical vision of transcultural theatre operates artistically in Paper Tiger's latest performance, *Revolution: The Foe of an Arrow Wound* (Berlin, 2023). The show explores “the transcultural exchange” initiated by Jesuit Giuseppe Castiglione, who worked as an artist at Qianlong's imperial court during Qing dynasty. The cultural legacy of this encounter becomes a starting point for Tian to examine China's dynastic preoccupation with political and regional exceptionalism during the Qing dynasty—a starting point that ultimately leads him to questioning of what he perceives to be the perpetuation and re-invention of neocolonial cultural practices today.

Stefan Christ (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Theoretical Debates on Historical Drama (lishi ju 历史剧) in Modern China

Historical drama (*lishi ju*) has been one of the main genres of Chinese theatre throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, both in the form of spoken drama (*huaaju* 话剧) and in the more traditional forms (*xiqu* 戏曲). Considering the importance of the genre, it is surprising that relatively little research has been conducted on how it has evolved. This is even more so if one considers the theoretical issues at stake. As historical dramas take a special position between fiction and reality, they inherently raise questions concerning not only the understanding of history – how it is remembered, told, and used politically – but also the nature of theatre itself – its artistic means, its relation to reality, and its social functions. Thus, this paper aims to survey some of the main theoretical issues and concepts that have been discussed in relation to historical drama in China, ranging from Guo Moruo’s writings in the Republican Era to the theoretical reflections of Li Jing 李静, who has written some of the most recent historical plays (*The Comedy of Qin* 秦国喜剧 in 2016 and *Rongyi’s Coat* 戎夷之衣 in 2021).

Joscha CHUNG (National Chung Cheng University)

The Coexistence of Chinese and European Theatres in Nineteenth Century Shanghai and the Emergence of Modern Chinese Theatre

The historiography of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Shanghai theatre has commonly viewed its Chinese and foreign performances as separated matters. Despite their simultaneous activeness within the settlement ever since the opening of the treaty port, theatre scholars paid little attention to the meaning of their coexistence. This paper proposes to remodel the writing of Shanghai theatre history of this period by adopting M. L. Pratt’s notion of the “contact perspective,” as opposed to the “national perspective.” The non-Chinese theatre in Shanghai included English-, French-, German- and Portuguese-speaking amateur performances. They were organized by local dramatic clubs and educational facilities which were attended by both settlers and Chinese students. In addition, professional artists and companies which traveled internationally form another important part of foreign theatre in Shanghai. Opera, circus, minstrelsy and illusion shows all frequented the city. While the amateurs interpreted beloved works on the stages in London or Paris, the professionals presented repertoires which were also welcomed by audiences in other treaty ports. Together with the performers and managers of Chinese traditional genres, the Shanghai settlement became a contact zone where theatre practitioners of diverse backgrounds could inspire each other and exchanges of artistic ideas took place vehemently. The emergence of modern Chinese theatre from this multilingual, cross-cultural environment reminds us that features of “national” importance, which often received recognition later as part of the nation-building process, may well be the product of the contact zone which existed between or at the margin of any established nation.

Annelise Finegan (New York University)

Chen Dabei’s Theorization of Amateur Theater and Tragedy in Early Spoken Drama

In the early 1920s actor, theorist, and playwright Chen Dabei 陈大悲 (Chen Tingyi 陈听弈, 1887–1944) contributed to Chinese theater interlingual translations of not only scripts, but also numerous manuals and guides related to amateur, little, or independent theater movements in the United States, Britain, and France. Chen provides a fascinating case study because his highly creative translation practice was part and parcel of his original writing and theoretical contributions. The *aimeide* theater that Chen both theorized and founded sought to translate these manuals and guides intersemiotically into staged productions, defining amateur theater against professional theater by its practitioners’ focus on theatrical art involving study and experimentation in the dual, complementary, and, ideally, balanced fields of literary scripts and staged performances. This combined interlingual-intersemiotic translation of contemporaneous Western theater movements burgeoned into a major *aimeide* movement that has been overwritten in *huaaju* or spoken drama histories as being little more than “amateur” productions. This presentation will foreground Chen’s theoretical writings in relation to their expression the 1920 anti-romance *The Hero and the Beauty* (*Yingxiong yu meiren* 英雄与美人, 1920) —one of the earliest, and almost completely forgotten full-length tragedies in *huaaju*—along with its radical rewriting as *Fourth Zhang’s Wife* (*Zhang Si taitai* 张四太太, 1931) a decade later.

Letizia Fusini (SOAS)

Tragedy, Modernity and Beiju in 1920s Chinese Intellectual Discourse and Dramaturgy

The concepts of tragedy and the tragic entered China's intellectual arena at the turn of the 20th century within the context of the New Culture and the May Fourth Movements and as a result of a systematic study of Western literature and critical theory. Tragedy thus captured the imagination of several Chinese intellectuals and playwrights who, from the 1920s onwards, attempted to create their own tragic works (*beiju*) with a view of forging a modern Chinese tragic spirit. But what are the characteristics of this 'tragic' spirit, and how does it compare to 'Western' ideas of tragedy? Moreover, does it add something new to the ongoing debates on the relationship between tragedy and modernity? The Chinese intellectuals' early conceptualisation(s) of this genre in terms of content, structure and social function will be appraised as part of a comprehensive, transnational discourse that seeks to incorporate *beiju* within the broader realm of tragic theory. Particularly, by scrutinising the links between *beiju* and Aristotelian tragedy, it will be argued that the idea of *beiju* may be said to reconcile the two apparently antagonistic categories of tragedy and modernity in a way that prefigures Brecht's epic theatre. Additionally, through an analysis of the tragic conflict underlying three tragic texts written in the 1920s by three different Chinese playwrights (Tian Han, Ouyang Yuqian and Bai Wei), it will be shown that the spirit of *beiju* consists in actively opposing evil and adversity through acts of heroic resistance that wipe out the protagonist's initial grief, thus providing the audience with valuable models to learn from.

Man HE (Williams College)

From Dialogue to Voice: The Soundscape of Street Theatre in 1930s China

Street theatre (*jietouju*) and other forms of mobile theaters emerged and flourished in 1930s China, as urban intellectual dramatists pursued a dual goal: to popularize spoken drama (*huaju*) and mobilize the masses for the resistance war against Japan. Through adopting aesthetic shifts—from fixed stages to makeshift performing spaces, and from scripted dialogues to seemingly improvised interactions between actors and audience—practitioners of street theatre presented a soundscape that differed significantly from that found in proscenium stage *huaju* productions, radio dramas, and sound pictures. This presentation examines how street theatre relied on voice and sound, rather than dialogues, to achieve emotional resonance with a mass audience. It explores how the practices of soundscape in street theatre reshaped an interactive space into a patriotic community, and how the "improvisational" effect was deliberately designed and rehearsed through practitioners' everyday training. Specifically, this presentation analyzes Hu Shaoxuan's *Theory of Street Theatre (Jietou ju lun, 1939)*, together with the orchestrated practices of traveling troupes and theatre education institutions, as well as the representation of street theatres as "play-within-the-play" in resistance plays (*kangzhan ju*). By interacting with various theorizations of street theatre scattered across diverse sources, this presentation broadens our understanding of the 1930s soundscape, a period predominantly marked by urban technological advancements in voice and sound reproduction and transmission. It further invites street theatre into scholarly debates regarding the concept of *hua* in 1930s *huaju*.

Yung-Fang HSU (University of Oxford)

Scenic Resonance and Sage King Symbolism in Qing Court Celebrations: Chirang (擊壤) in Emperor Kangxi's 60th Birthday Album and Court Drama

In the Qing dynasty, beginning with Emperor Kangxi, the production of encyclopedias, scriptures, maps, and historical records played a critical role in shaping the imperial identity and legitimizing Qing rule over China. A key artifact in this cultural endeavor is the "Album of the Magnificent Record of Longevity for Emperor Kangxi's 60th Birthday," which not only documents the emperor's birthday but also serves as a symbolic linkage to the Confucian concept of the Sage King. Under the guidance of Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715), the album juxtaposes Kangxi's birthday celebration with the legendary tale of Chirang (擊壤), reinforcing the emperor's divine mandate. This research sharpens its focus on how this album, along with its vivid illustrations of festive scenes, initiated a novel tradition within the Qing Court for imperial birthdays. It investigates the origin and development of this elaborate parade, a spectacle previously unseen in the imperial city, and how it crafted a new image for the emperor's birthday, interweaving it with the Chirang narrative. The study has two main objectives: firstly, to dissect the texts and images in the album, examining how various elements – the provincial welcoming teams, the Eight Banners, and the royal family – contributed to constructing the Chirang image for Kangxi's birthday. Secondly, to explore how this concept of Chirang, as envisioned by Kangxi, evolved in later Qing court dramas, creating an interplay between historical celebrations and mythic tales. This analysis aims to demonstrate how Qing court dramas can be interpreted as multi-layered texts, offering a window into the intricate interplay between historical reality and narrative mythology.

Joy Shih-yi HUANG (National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan)

Harmonies of Humanity: Music and Communal Vision in Wu Nian Zhen's (吳念真) The Human Condition (2): She and the Men in Her Life

This presentation explores the Taiwanese director and playwright Wu Nian Zhen's *The Human Condition (2): She and the Men in Her Life*, highlighting its portrayal of a community navigating transitional justice during Taiwan's 2000 political shift. Through an examination of Wu's narrative structure, it aims to shed light on envisioning a community that embraces diverse voices yet to emerge, reflecting on present circumstances. It focuses on the musical aspects of the performance to reconsider Chen Huiwen's concept of women's "counteracting skills," as a way to explore how women can utilize these skills to foster a more inclusive and diverse cultural environment. The discussion will be structured into three parts, each delving into distinct facets of music's interpretation and thematic significance within the narrative. The first part initiates by examining the symbolism of the piano and piano music throughout the story. This analysis is then supplemented by an exploration of Meredith Lynne Schweig's work, *The Song Readers: Rap Music and the Politics of Storytelling in Taiwan*, which elucidates the intricate connections between politics, music, and community on the island (specifically focus after 2010). The final part expands upon the foundational context established in the first section to interpret Wu's characterization techniques. This contextual understanding enhances our comprehension of Wu's portrayal of characters within the play, particularly in relation to Yuki's symbolic role and her pivotal contribution to the inception of "the National Theatre" series.

Justyna Jaguścik (University of Berne)

Pandemic-Era Uncertainty in Chinese-Language Drama

My presentation introduces two theater scripts that address the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on China's vulnerable demographic of farmers and migrant workers. Qin Xu's (PRC) play *Water* (2022) focuses on a village in Henan hit by the 2021 summer floods. It occasionally mentions the pandemic, which is comparable with a chronic condition that is less disturbing than the acute emergency of the flooding. Qin's script problematizes the idea of village community, which in this case also comprises people who could not leave, due to lockdown and floods. It asks what bounds emerge between outsiders and locals, who all remain caught amid life and death that is represented by the numerous coffins that float on the rising waters. *Once Upon a Time in Sanhe* (2021) by Zou Jingfeng (Macau) thematizes the everyday of migrant workers who frequent Sanhe's job markets that offer casual daily jobs to low-skilled workers. The two protagonists have already given up any idea of success and they only work as much as needed to get by. They choose a precarious existence of balancing occasional work with hanging around aimlessly, which at least makes them free to decide on daily basis whether to work or not. However, the onset of the pandemic turns their space of freedom into a prison and challenges friendship with social distancing rules. My presentation places Qin and Zou's texts within the discourses of risk society and post-pandemic uncertainty that struggle to describe the current global landscape.

Haoran JIANG (CUHK)

Returning to Reality: The Place-Baseness of Taiwan's Campus Songs

The genre of campus songs thrived during the 1970s and 1980s in Taiwan's music scene. These compositions typically encompass themes related to students' romantic experiences, aspirations, and melancholy, with certain songs delving into socio-political aspects, contributing to the formation of a collective national identity. Despite their historical significance in popular music, critics argue that these songs often align with a Greater China narrative, neglecting local nuances. Drawing upon Sinophone studies, which emphasize that Chinese-speaking cultures outside mainland China are place-based products that actively engage with local societies (Shih 2017), this study explores the place-basedness of campus songs, scrutinizing their interaction with and contribution to Taiwanese society. By integrating Hsiao's sociological perspective on the "return-to-reality generation," the study re-establishes the connection of campus songs with the historical context of the 1970s, during which Taiwanese young people confronted the country's diplomatic challenges and voiced concerns for society. An integrative analysis of musical texts, archival documents, and oral history reveals the incorporation of Hokkien-language compositions, local musical elements, and depictions of social realities in campus songs, demonstrating that these compositions also express concerns for Taiwanese society. Furthermore, the study delves into the paradox wherein campus songs embody Taiwanese-ness but are deemed "not Taiwanese enough," drawing on Jones's (2020) research on musical form and exploring the artistic techniques employed by campus songs. It highlights the challenges in integrating traditional components into modern pop formats. Additionally, the deviation from realist techniques also contributes to a perceived absence of distinct Taiwanese-ness.

Mei-Yen LEE (National Pingtung University)

Theory and Practice of Jing (“Tranquillity”) in Landscape Painting and Guqin Music—with Ping Sha Luo Yan (“Descending Geese Falling on Flat Sand”) as an Example

In ancient China, the literati emphasized the practical path of personal cultivation in landscape painting and guqin music aesthetics. Subsequently, it incorporated the concept initially rooted in Daoism and Zen for spiritual cultivation, *jing* (“tranquillity”), into landscape painting and guqin music theories as a critical principle for creative and aesthetic practice. In particular, from the Qing dynasty onwards, the concept of *jing* gained considerable attention in landscape painting and guqin music, with the notion of *jing* becoming prominent. Even in the contemporary Chinese art scene, the spirit of *jing* continues to hold considerable importance. This study first examined the connotations of *jing* as depicted in the literature on landscape painting and guqin music since the Tang and Song dynasties. The objective was to understand how these connotations adequately express the spiritual significance of landscape painting and guqin music, focusing on how the concept of *jing* of landscape painting and guqin music theories became prominent in the Qing dynasty. Furthermore, the works of *Ping Sha Luo Yan* (“Descending Geese Falling on Flat Sand”), a painting and a piece of guqin music, were used as examples to discuss how *jing* manifests in landscape painting and guqin music.

Siyuan LIU (University of British Columbia)

Creative Artist versus Interpretive Artis: Zhang Junxiang’s 张骏祥 Theorization of the Spoken Drama Director

In the winter of 1940, modern Chinese spoken drama *huaju* 话剧 director Zhang Junxing returned to China after four years of studying theatre directing at Yale University and went to the southwest hinterland in support of the War of Resistance against Japan. For the next six years, he first taught and directed at the National Theatre School 国立剧专 in Jiang’an 江安, then moved to Chongqing 重庆 as a professional director. During this time, he wrote essays on the theory and practice of directing and serialized translated chapters of his Yale Professor Alexander Dean’s *Fundamentals of Theatre Directing*, at times elaborating the text with examples from Chinese plays he had directed. Together, these chapters became the first systematic theoretical manual on the art and technique of theatrical directing in China, highly influential among students and professionals in both Shanghai and the southwest. In addition to the manual, Zhang also wrote about his own directorial practice, especially on his preference of the director as a creative rather than interpretive artist. Based on archival and published contemporaneous sources, I examine the effect of Zhang’s Yale studies and later practice on his theorization on the art and technique of the *huaju* director.

Regina Llamas (IE University)

The Distinction Between Xiju 戲劇 and Xiqu 戲曲 in Wang Guowei's 王國維 (1877-1927) History of Song and Yuan Drama 宋元戲曲

In his *History of Song and Yuan Drama*, Wang Guowei was the first scholar to systematically and critically analyze earlier writings on dramatic history and lay the foundations for later dramatic historiography. Wang approached his subject historically, looking back from what he considered a fully formed theater to the roots of the different core elements that formed the genesis of the genre: song, dance and comedy. This method prompted Wang to examine the development of specific types of performance, drawing special attention to moments when two or more performance forms coalesced to become an original new genre. This lengthy process of accretion reached its final stage in a fully formed theater in the Yuan. In his *History*, Wang made a distinction between the terms *xiju*, which he used to designate a variety of different types of performance, and *xiqu* employed to describe a fully constituted song-theater—"the use of song and dance to enact a story." Later scholars made ample use of this distinction, yet found fault with Wang's lack of clarity in establishing precise differences between the two terms. In this paper I will explore Wang's use of the terms *xiju* and *xiqu*, describe their differences and explain later scholars' caveats with these terms.

Man Ling LOO (National Chengchi University)

The Resurrection of Narrators – Narrative Behaviors in Puppetry Theater and TRPG Adaptations of "The Legend of the White Snake"

"The Legend of the White Snake," an ancient Chinese folk legend, has evolved over centuries, giving rise to rich variations in different media. Puppetry theater (布袋戲) and tabletop role-playing games (TRPG) present the most innovative forms. Through role-playing, the actions of multiple narrators become the story, and the continual replay becomes the artwork. This characteristic aligns with Gérard Genette's definition and emphasis on narrative behaviors in "Narrative Discourse." This study based on textual analysis and supplemented by narratology theory, is divided into three major sections: "Protruding Narrator" in puppetry theater, "Multiple Narrators" in TRPG, and the shared "Role-Playing" behavior. Ultimately, it concludes that narrators have been revived in form, dominating the content of discourse and constituting collective creativity. By contrasting and filling in the narrative behaviors that Genette couldn't fully close, it develops a postmodern narrative state where behavior becomes the story.

Xiaoning LU (SOAS)

Voice in Transition: Qiu Yuefeng and Disembodied Stardom in Late Socialist China

In the late 1970s, post-Cultural Revolution China witnessed a remarkable revival in Chinese film culture, marked by the rise of disembodied stardom among voice actors, particularly at the Shanghai Translated and Dubbed Film Studio. A standout figure was these actors was Qiu Yuefeng, known as the "Mozart among Chinese voice actors." His masterful vocal interpretations of Western characters from European films captivated Chinese audiences. Qiu's stardom, challenging traditional image-focused star studies, brought to light the transnational dynamics of Chinese cinema during the socialist era. This paper examines Qiu's distinctive stardom through the "transit-transition" framework, analyzing how the state's selective dubbing of Western films initially for elite viewers and later for the general public, facilitated his ascent to fame. Qiu's distinct, "decadent" voice, in contrast to the revolutionary soundscape of the time, opened new emotional and cultural vistas for Chinese audiences, symbolizing a broader societal shift towards openness and diverse cultural engagement.

Alastair Ewan Macdonald (University of Oxford)

Beyond the Forbidden City: Far-Off Lands in Chinese Court Drama

Though Chinese court drama was most often performed within the Forbidden City, it was also arguably the most “outward facing” of pre-modern Chinese literary forms. Not only was court drama regularly performed to emissaries visiting the capital, it also served as a conduit through which images of foreign lands and peoples were conveyed to the imperial court. Perhaps more importantly, these references to foreign lands and peoples also serve a domestic purpose: to underline the power and influence of the Chinese empire. This paper utilises the TEXTCOURT database of nearly 540 court drama scripts as its basis: as placenames have been tagged throughout this corpus, we can extract the data to map the world beyond China’s borders as it was presented to the Imperial court. Using the data so obtained, we can not only visualise the geographical spread of place names mentioned in court drama, but also arrive at a basic assessment of how important various foreign places were in the conceptual map of Chinese court drama, based on the frequency of their occurrence. The paper then continues to combine this data-driven, big-picture approach with a text-based approach, conducting a close reading of a small number of case studies to explore *how* these places were presented in court drama and for what purposes.

Désirée Marianini Torta (Sapienza University of Rome)

Re-imagining the Past: Contemporary Chinese Documentary and the Reuse of Archive Material

The form of documentary filmmaking after the 1990s has undergone profound changes. The narrative forms proposed by Chinese documentary filmmakers have unearthed themes, characters, and instances that have counterbalanced the fictional films produced under the aegis of the government (Qi Wang 2014). This article aims to focus on the practice of memory as a narrative act within two documentaries: *Though I am Gone* (*Wo sui siqu*, 2007) directed by Hu Jie 胡杰 and *Breathless Animals* (*Dongwu fangyan*, 2019) directed by Lei Lei 雷磊, both documentaries focus on familiar biographical stories and how they are intertwined with the various social traumas of contemporary Chinese history. Starting from the digital memory studies by Astrid Erll we want to analyze how different narrative modes affects the practice of memory. Particular attention will be paid to the use of found footage: how does the use of archival material affect the narrative of memory? Do the authors aim for a creative reuse of archival material or do they use it in a traditional way? If we assume that the film medium is dynamic, how does memory vary within dynamism? The role of the media today is crucial to the re-creation of memory, the article aims to highlight how alongside the places of memory, where memory becomes fixed, the dynamism of the media makes it regenerate.

Valerie Pellatt (Newcastle University)

Drama Moving with the Twentieth Century: How Cao Yu and His Daughter Wan Fang Lifted the Lid on Chinese Society 1930s-1940s and 1980s-2000s – Differences in Approach in Line with Developments in Drama, Theatre and Socio-Political Environment

This paper compares the dramatic texts and potential staged performances of a number of Cao Yu’s and Wan Fang’s plays which bookend the twentieth century. There are close parallels in the structure, plot and characterisation of the father’s plays and those of the daughter. Both were writing cutting-edge dramas which depicted contemporaneous Chinese society. Both depict dysfunctional families, rural poverty, exploited communities and the iron grip of Confucian-style authority. Yet, with six to seven decades separating the creation of their plays, what is different? How do father and daughter differ in the techniques they use to transmit the deeper messages of their drama? Given the differing political environments in which they were writing, how are the structure, dialogue and semiotics of the dramas constrained by their socio-political environment or free in their expression? A major difference is the use of stage directions, and there are historical reasons for this. Wan Fang is not innovating – she is supported by almost a century of ‘modern’ drama; she shifts away from extensive stage directions: do her characters have the same impact as those of her father? How has she sustained or enhanced her language in order to speak through the actors to the audience? How do the non-verbal semiotics of her intended staging differ from those of her father? I look at four plays by Cao Yu and four by Wan Fang, demonstrating how their scripting moves with the century through structure, dialogue, verbal and non-verbal semiotics.

Anna Stecher (University of Naples “L’Orientale”)

The Chinese Translation of Stanislavski: Texts and Contexts

Ten years ago, “Stanislavski” (斯坦尼) and “the system” (体系) were synonymous with an outdated form of theatre, at least from the perspective of Chinese experimental theatre makers. The places where “Stani” continued to be performed were government theatre houses such as the Beijing People’s Art Theatre, which took Stanislavski’s theories of performance as its model. Yet, when Arthur Miller directed *Death of a Salesman* at the People’s Art Theatre in 1983, he wrote: “Having detected no sign of Stanislavski training in their working methods...I have decided against suggesting any of its techniques...” (Miller 1983, p.67) How is it possible to say that Chinese actors did not know Stanislavski’s method? Should they not be more familiar with Stani than Miller himself? Was Stanislavski not the main performance method practiced in China for many years? My hypothesis is that Miller and the People’s Art Theatre had different understandings of Stanislavski’s techniques. It is therefore worth studying what Stanislavski means in the Chinese context. One way of doing so is through a critical look at the translation of his work. I will examine Stanislavski’s *Collected Works* published as *Sitanisilafusiji quanji* 斯坦尼斯拉夫斯基全集 in the 1950s and 1960s and compare them to concomitant translations in German and English. I will focus on the selections of texts as well as on the translation of specific texts and terminology. I will also sketch the context in history and theatre.

Mirjam Tröster (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Reinventing the Kaohsiung Film Festival Through Immersive Storytelling

Immersive works from Taiwan have recently attracted attention and increased the visibility of Taiwan on the international stage. Kaohsiung Film Festival (KFF) is one of the catalysts for immersive storytelling – including virtual (VR) and other forms of extended reality (XR) – in Taiwan. The festival was established in 2001 and has become part of a broader cluster of film-related institutions set up by the municipal government. The most important of these and now in charge of festival operation is the Kaohsiung Film Archive (KFA). From its early days, KFF has both been reaching out to the world and attempted to put Kaohsiung on the map of film in Taiwan – with mixed results. As this paper will show, however, KFF and KFA have seized the opportunities that immersive storytelling offers. KFA has started producing VR films showcased at KFF as early as 2017, and KFA/KFF have turned into what Dina Jordanova (2015) calls an “industry node.” The festival’s XR section, XR Dreamland, including its international XR competition make KFF stand out from other film festivals in Taiwan. Simultaneously, the success of XR Dreamland has left its mark on the festival, which is now running more or less on parallel tracks. While continuities between the film festival and its XR section can be observed – be these in the fields of programming or collaboration patterns –, XR Dreamland has swiftly redefined its connection to history and the urban space.

Emily Wilcox (William & Mary)

Curriculum as Theory: The Beijing Dance School’s First Chinese Classical Dance Teaching Syllabus as a Theoretical Artifact

In 1960, the Chinese Classical Dance Research and Teaching Group at the Beijing Dance School completed one of the most important documents in modern Chinese dance history. *The Teaching Method for Chinese Classical Dance* in 300 pages outlines a curriculum for teaching basic skills and techniques of a new performance genre: Chinese classical dance. The text begins with a 9-page “Introduction” that explains the ideas motivating the work and the methods used to create it. Next is the core of the text, 187 pages devoted to introducing exercises and movements. This section is divided into five parts – legs, lower back, technical movements, hands and arms, and steps. Each part begins with a short explanatory introduction, followed by further subdivisions based on type and difficulty level. Accompanying the written descriptions are 234 hand-drawn illustrations, which show correct body positions and, in some cases, direction and sequence of movement. Following this are three short sections titled “How to organize class,” “Methods for routines and etc.,” and “Thoughts on Chinese classical dance piano accompaniment.” Finally, there are 118 pages of appendices. These include the “Seven-Year Pedagogy Outline,” listing the movements to be mastered at each grade level, and four “Sample Classes” for different genders and grade levels. Nine illustrations appear in this section, together with 106 spatial diagrams and 80 musical scores, 69 for piano in Western staff notation and eleven for folk ensemble in Chinese simplified notation. This talk analyzes this historical document as a theoretical text in Chinese performance theory.

Lanjun XU (National University of Singapore)

Projecting “Healthy Films”: Chong Gay Theatres Ltd and Chinese Cinema in Singapore of the Late Cold War Period

Chong Gay Theatres Ltd played a pivotal role as a film distributor in Singapore during the 1970s to the 1990s, significantly impacting the introduction of Chinese cinema in the region. Mainly managed by Lim Djit Sun (1925-1987), an Indonesian Chinese immigrant to Singapore, the company began by importing Chinese leftist films from Hong Kong. However, during the 1980s, it changed to importing Mandarin films from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in collaboration with the Shanghai Film Corporation. This transition was shaped by the social, cultural and political changes in Singapore of the time, including the Speaking Mandarin Campaign, shifts in film censorship regulations, the diminishing presence of Hong Kong Cantonese and Taiwanese films in the region, and the generational shifts within the audience. Also, Chong Gay Theatres decided to try their hand at making their own features and the most influential was *Two Sides of the Bridge*. This film claimed a strong local identity by using a majority Singaporean cast and represented Singapore at the Asian Film Festival of that year. However, following the official commencement of diplomatic relations between the PRC and Singapore in 1990, Chong Gay Theatres experienced a gradual decline. The essay explores Chong Gay Theatres’ operations amidst the complexities of the late Cold War era, especially its dual mission: transcending ideological confines to foster transnational cultural connections between China and Singapore while concurrently nurturing a distinct national cinema in Singapore. This analysis draws from archival research, oral interviews, and media resources. In particular, the essay looks into the visits of Chinese Film Delegations to Singapore in the 1980s, examining the role of Hong Kong in facilitating such connections, local audience responses, the hybrid genres of the exhibited Chinese films, and the image of China portrayed through these selections.

Chenru XUE (University of Turku)

Arctic in Shanshui: Landscape of Chinese Arctic Documentaries

This article presents an analysis of the Arctic landscape imagery in two Chinese documentaries, “Rediscovering the Arctic” and “The Light Chaser,” through the lens of visual culture. It tries to answer two research questions: what visual strategies do the Chinese documentaries “Rediscovering the Arctic” and “The Light Chaser” employ to represent the Arctic landscape, and how do these representations reflect China’s foreign policy interests and cultural identity through the use of a Shanshui-like scopic regime? This article argues that these documentaries use a Shanshui-like scopic regime to represent the Arctic, symbolizing the landscape in a way that resonates with a Taoist perspective. This approach not only creates a unique visuality but also evokes nostalgia and patriotism among the domestic audience, aligning with China’s foreign policy interests in the Arctic. The incorporation of the Arctic in China’s Belt and Road Policy and its representation in Chinese cultural products has been examined in this article. With a method of iconography, this study interprets the landscape as a cultural symbol and part of an ideological structure, which shaped the Arctic landscape as an imagined space, alienated from its material reality. The documentaries employ specific visual strategies to create a Shanshui-like landscape, transforming the Arctic into a narrative subject and reflecting China’s ideological stance on Arctic governance. The scopic regime in both documentaries not only articulates China’s ideological position in Arctic affairs but also appeals to domestic sentiments, reaffirming China’s unique role in the Arctic region.

Valeria Zanier (University of Bologna)

Identity, Representation and Activism in Asian/Chinese Diaspora Cinema in Europe

In the XXIst century, increasing transnational mobility and China's rise have led to changes in the perception of Asian people and in their representation in European media. Asia's increasing presence has also pushed a growing number of artists, activists and writers of Asian/Chinese descent to create their own narratives. The paper studies the evolution of Asian diaspora cinema in Europe integrating film as a source of historical research. Films can quickly reach a wide audience and make an indelible impression. Films also reflect the interests as well as the concerns of their time. When examining diaspora cinema, cultural identity emerges as a relevant focus, though choosing precise definitions of identity differs according to personal histories. Hence, the need to dig deeper into the complexity of cultural identity and to explore activism, as a key pathway to exploring personal histories, creating self-consciousness, understanding one's role and rights in society. The paper will focus on The Netherlands, chosen as a case because of the recent awareness-raising of the Dutch role in Asia (Van Reybroek 2020), which brought important cultural and educational implications and integrated into the debate on decolonizing citizenship from a historical perspective (De Jong 2022). Being one of Europe's liveliest and most connected economies, as well as a vibrant multicultural hub (especially Amsterdam), The Netherlands has seen its various ethnic components participating ever more in producing culture.



GENDER AND QUEER STUDIES

GENDER AND QUEER STUDIES

Zishu CHEN (University of York)

Colouring Digital Feminism: Interpretation and Construction of “Nü Quan” Definition Within Female Subculture Community

The paper focuses on the social group – the female fan community and their engagement and negotiation with the kaleidoscopic concept of feminism (女权主义, Nü Quan Zhu Yi) in the Chinese context. In the contemporary virtual space, Chinese digital grassroots feminism leverages the affordances of social media, such as broader audiences, wider circulation, hypermedia information display, and less censorship, to build and disseminate feminist discourses. As this circulation becomes more effective and an increasing number of the population, along with various types of audiences, approach these ideologies, disputes, and divergences regarding the definition, rationales, and theoretical guidance of “Chinese feminism” correspondingly engender. Within the debate, I found that female fans of certain women-dominant subculture communities, such as *danmei* (耽美), idol culture, and otome games, occupy a very intriguing position. They play a joint role as a witness, a supporter, a participant, a transmitter, and simultaneously an opponent of the prevailing digital feminist discourses. This multifaceted identity highlights their participation in public discussions that may offer us a unique perspective to explore Chinese digital feminism. Based on data collected from ethnographic research and analysed through discourse analysis, I will, therefore, emphasise this perspective, elucidating their views on high-profile feminist ideas and practices prevalent on the platform Weibo, accompanied by their own attitudes, interpretations, self-identity, and definitions of Nü Quan Zhu Yi/feminism.

Sanna Eriksson (University of York)

To Be or Not to Be a Housewife: Discussions Around Choice and Circumstance

Why do women become housewives in contemporary urban China? What discourses around housewives are prevailing among individual women and in popular TV dramas? How does full-time motherhood align with the party-state’s conceptualization of women’s social roles in the era of the three-child policy? In Socialist China, paid work in the public sphere was valued, whereas being a housewife was perceived as bourgeois (Evans 2008). Despite re-validation of the domestic sphere in the 1980s when women were encouraged to return home, women have continued to engage in paid work in high numbers. Simultaneously the All-China Women’s Federation has discussed how women can best balance work and family. In recent years, however, women’s ‘traditional’ roles at the core of the family have been re-emphasized in official discourse (Hird 2017). In interviews conducted recently in Shanghai, middle-class women discussed full-time motherhood as a choice that is either allowed or compelled by circumstances. Yet it is a choice that many of them are unwilling to personally make. Similarly, the popular fictional character Gu Jia in the TV drama *Nothing But Thirty* (*Sanshi eryl* 2020) addresses the challenges of transitioning from a housewife back to a societal role. Through analysis of interview and TV drama data I will firstly explore how discourses around full-time motherhood address the gendered relationship between the private/home and the public/society. Secondly, I will discuss how women’s individual valuation of reproductive labour within the domestic sphere may not align with official calls for women to re-focus on the family.

Vincent S. Leung (Lingnan University)

Homosexuality in Early China: History and Historiography of a Minor Tradition

Our knowledge of homosexual traditions in the ancient world has grown by leaps and bounds in the past few decades. The landmark publication of *Greek Homosexuality* by John Dover in 1978 inaugurated a whole new field on the history of same-sex relations in the classical Mediterranean world. A great many publications on this once-taboo subject have appeared since then, and by now, we have a fairly rich, panoramic view of the varied lives of homosexuals in Ancient Greece and Rome. In contrast, the scholarly landscape at the opposite end of Eurasia, namely Ancient China, is far less developed. Groundbreaking works did appear a few decades ago, such as Bret Hirsch’s *Passions of Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (1990) and Zhang Zaizhou’s *Aiwei de licheng: Zhongguo gudai tongxinglian shi (Ambiguous Journeys: A History of Homosexuality in China)* (2001). Significantly fewer new studies, however, have appeared in their wake. In this paper, I will present my ongoing book project *Homosexuality in Early China: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents*, which I hope to be a meaningful contribution to the field. It will be a critical anthology of all writings about homosexuality and homosexual individuals in Ancient China from antiquity to the second century CE. I will introduce the design of this anthology, the very first of its kind, the range of sources that we have, and the furtive glimpses that they afford us into the often-perilous lives of homosexuals in Ancient China.

Elena Morandi (University of Ljubljana)

Corpus Linguistic Analysis on Gender and Language in Contemporary China

This research investigates the intricate relationship between gender and language in China, specifically focusing on how linguistic practices may perpetuate gender stereotypes. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theoretical approach (Fairclough 1992; Van Dijk 2000; Machin 2012; Wodak 2012) and Corpus Linguistics as methodology (Sinclair 2004; Reppen 2010), the study explores the dynamics among language, ideology, power, and social structures. The examination revolves around the reproduction of gender biases in Chinese society and the representation of gender identities in contemporary media discourse. Acknowledging the evolving landscape of gender dynamics, including the increasing agency of women, global feminist thought (Cameron 1992; Barlow 2004), changing roles of men (Herring 1995; Louie 2014), and LGBTQIA+ activism (Lau 2024; Qian 2021), the study recognizes the persistence of a binary understanding of gender in Chinese society. Analyzing a large-scale Chinese corpus made up of texts collected from the Internet, the study identifies patterns, trends, and semantic variations in language use. It focuses in on online discourses and explores the emergence of neologisms conveying derogatory meanings or gender-biased expressions in Chinese Internet Language (CIL) (Jiao 2021; Lang 2023). The research delves into the role of gender stereotypes in transmitting social values and shaping self-identity within the Chinese culture (Tang 2012). By addressing gaps in the existing literature, the study underscores the crucial role of linguistic practices within specific social contexts to foster inclusive representations of gender identities. The anticipated outcomes aim to contribute to gender research and societal actions promoting gender equality in China, emphasizing the transformative potential of language in shaping societal norms and perceptions.

Zheng YING (Utrecht University)

Big Heroine Dramas in Contemporary China: Costume, Authenticity and an Alternative History of Women of Power

Big heroine dramas (大女主剧) – a specific category of Chinese costume dramas – have been popular recently, with the rising market of female audiences/consumers in China. The popularity of this genre brought up fierce debates on feminism. The shows, written by female authors, are about the stories of powerful women in imperial China. A critical hypothesis here is that the shows combine the figuration of ancient, powerful women and a persona of neo-liberalist feminism. Why do audiences accept the anachronism of big heroine dramas, and how does historical authenticity become coherent with a modern narrative? With costume as an analytical corpus, this article involves the approaches of feminist theory, historical theory and costume studies. The costumes of big heroine dramas are a hybridity of authentic antique and imaginary design. They contribute to building up historical authenticity and the neo-liberalist ideas of power and hierarchy. Costumes thus become the field where the authenticity of the past folds with the reality of the present. Meanwhile, big heroine dramas rewrite an alternative history of powerful women for women audiences. The assemblage of historiography and modern feminist fiction offers rebellious narratives that disturb the state-advocated notion of heterosexual romantic relationships, marriage and family.

Yiming ZHANG (Bielefeld University)

Boundary-Folding in Heteronormative Space. Gendered Government, Organisation, and Citizens across Marriage Registry in Southwest China

Empirical research on heteronormativity has largely been framed in terms of how it is challenged, with limited systematic exploration of the intricacies of its occurrence. This paper uses a boundary-folding framework to examine the ongoing diversification of boundaries in the space production of heteronormativity across the Chinese marriage registry. It is informed by a qualitative study with comparative observation of the placement of 6 urban marriage registries and an 8-month ethnography of one urban marriage registry in southwest China. This research elucidates that heteronormativity, within the confines of marriage registries, undergoes not only formation and reinforcement but also adjustments and resistance. Multiple actions in the marriage registry contribute to the folding, refolding, and unfolding of boundaries. The government underscores the moral traditions and legal legitimacy of heterosexual marriage under the authority of the state and parents by making boundaries. Local organizations concentrate on family intimate relationships and adjust the rules and boundaries of certification rooms, thereby strengthening the gender binary. Citizens exhibit spatial behaviors of refuser, enhancer, and rule-bender within the certification room, dynamically influencing the normativity of heterosexual marriages. This paper contributes to gender and space sociology by highlighting the heterogeneity within heteronormative spaces and its impact on mindsets of gender and marriage.

Biwan ZHOU (Nanjing University/Ghent University)

Exploring Images of Women in Lüshi Chunqiu 吕氏春秋: A Philosophical Interpretation of Chinese Gender Conception

Lüshi Chunqiu 吕氏春秋, compiled by Lü Buwei 吕不韦 and his guests, is one of the important representative works of the pre-Qin Eclectics (先秦杂家) of the late Warring States period. This paper will explore gender conception in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*. The *Lüshi Chunqiu* describes an idealized vision of women's participation in labor division. Although this image of women is not necessarily the real history of their lives at that time, it reflects the status of women in ancient Chinese history and the important role they played in the development of Chinese thought, culture and tradition. We traced the origin of the gender conception in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, in structures of cosmology, morality and the meaning of human life. While constructing the cosmogenesis theory of "Taiyi" 太一, it also reflects the thinking of the complementarity of men and women, which breaks the oppositional binary of femininity-masculinity and provides an idealized possibility for the development of gender hierarchy.



SCIENCE, MEDICINE, AND TECHNOLOGY

SCIENCE, MEDICINE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Marco Bonaglia, Antonio Frisoli, and CHEN Rui (Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies)

China's Robotics Rise. An Analysis of the Sector through its Policies, Actors and Unicorns

The robotic sector is undergoing a transformative phase in China, and positioning the country as a frontrunner in the global race to become a science and technology superpower. China is the world's largest consumer of robots, which has been designed and encouraged through various governmental policies and programmes over the past decades. Driven by the challenges related to labor costs, and a shortage of labor, and the imperative to lead a new wave of industrial revolution, the Chinese government has actively promoted the production and application of industrial robots in recent years. To provide a comprehensive understanding of China's robotics landscape, this research starts from the analysis of the key governmental policies in this field. Then, this study explores the strategic sector and explains its main "sub-sectors" such as medical, humanoid, collaborative and industrial robots, among others, to unravel the complexity and sophistication of China's world of robotics. Furthermore, this research presents some successful case studies of Chinese robotics "unicorns." These enterprises are expanding nationally, and are laying the foundation for a revolution that will probably impact not only Chinese society but the entire world. At the end of the research, an analysis of current opportunities and challenges in China's robotics development is conducted. The emphasis on humanoid robots underscores China's dedication to technological advancement, presenting the prospect of reshaping the global industrial development landscape in the ensuing decade.

Wenyi LUO (SOAS)

From "Chouren" to "Arithmetician": Li Shanlan and the Subject Independence of Chinese Mathematics in the Time of the Western Affairs Movement

By the time of the Western Affairs Movement (洋務運動) in the 1860s and 1870s, the subject of Chinese mathematics underwent a notable transformation, showing a discernible detachment from its affiliation with classical studies (經學). Scholars specializing in arithmetic or mathematics began identifying themselves as "arithmeticians" (算學家) rather than the once prevailing "chouren" (疇人, those who specialized in mathematics or astronomy), which demonstrates the shift in their self-identification. Besides, more young scholars devoted themselves to mathematical research. This paper will take Li Shanlan (李善蘭) as the case, recognized as the "first person in arithmetic" during the late Qing, and mainly focus on his teaching career at Tongwen Guan in Peking. Despite the apparent autonomy observed, this paper will argue that this independence is not absolute and the process of making it is incomplete. The subject of mathematics at that time still remained and relied on the interconnectedness with broader academic ecosystems, particularly classic studies. Scholars still relied on such a connection to access academic sources and establish prestige though they adopted the self-conscious identity of "arithmetician." The flourishing of mathematics and the elevation of scholars' status were predominantly contingent on aligning with the imperative of "self-strengthening" (自強) in that period.

Laura Pflug (Ruhr University Bochum)

"Read Your Sun Tsu and Relax": German-Chinese Negotiations About High-Tech Projects in the 1980s

"Read your *Sun Tsu* and relax" was a tongue-in-cheek piece of advice that concluded a "Summary of lessons when negotiating with the Chinese" prepared by the UK Department of Trade and Industry in the 1980s. These lessons were actually learned from negotiations about a nuclear power plant deal. During the 1980s, West Germany also tried to get a foothold in the developing Chinese nuclear energy market. As part of this effort, the West German government planned to support the establishment of a nuclear energy training centre in China, that was intended as a flanking measure to a commercial nuclear power plant project that the German atomic industry was bidding for. This marked the beginning of negotiations that lasted several years. During their course, the originally planned nuclear energy training centre was transformed into a high-tech training centre for modern industrial technology at the insistence of the Chinese government, while the nuclear power plant project was cancelled. A tug-of-war ensued over ever higher costs for the envisaged centre, that were to be borne by the German side. So, had the German side not "read their *Sun Tsu* and sufficiently relaxed"? On the basis of archival sources, the presentation will examine this case as an example of German-Chinese negotiation strategies in the 1980s. It is particularly worth looking back on, not least against the background of current discussions on strategic dealings with the PRC.

Mathieu Torck (Ghent University)

“Vegetables or No Vegetables, That’s the Question”: A Cross-Cultural Probe into Diverging Dietary Traditions in Europe and China and Their Impact on Early Modern Shipboard Diets and the Occurrence of Scurvy

Ever since the age of long-distance seafaring, European ship’s crews struggled to come to terms with the nutritional challenges that sea voyages brought with them. As a result, the vitamin C deficiency disease scurvy ravaged ship’s crews for centuries on end. In spite of its endemic presence among human populations since times immemorial, the occurrence of scurvy in seafaring micro-societies has been explained in retrospect by ignorance of the fundamental role of vitamins. In essence, scurvy was caused by the inability of maritime authorities to include perishable foodstuffs into the diets, in spite of the ubiquitous presence of effective preservation traditions in early modern Europe. Starkly contrasting this peculiar shift away from a balanced and nutritionally safe shipboard diet is the firmly ingrained position of vegetables in Chinese dietary traditions and logistical practices connected to military operations and maritime passages (Li, Yin et al. 2002; Torck 2009, Torck 2024). The paper aims to assess the deeper-lying causes of the absence of life-saving components in non-continental, mainly preserved diets by means of a comparative, cross-cultural approach combining historical, socio- anthropological, medical and dietary perspectives. The topic will also be assessed in view of the roles of Chinese communities against the backdrop of the Manila Galleon Trade, an early modern globalizing space of exchange, interaction, (non)-interpenetration between Chinese and European traditions. The paper eventually tackles the hypothesis whether scurvy as a typical ailment of long-distance seafaring may or may not have been a socially induced medical problem in the context of expansionist early capitalist societies (Waitzkin 2015).

Dizhen WU (SOAS)

Reshaping Perceptions: Medical Images in Late Qing Pictorials, 1872-1912

This paper aims to illuminate the significant role played by Chinese pictorials in shaping medical perceptions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The introduction of Western medicine to China was accompanied by a complex process of psychological and behavioral adjustment, as Chinese society grappled with the impact of Western medical and cultural influences. While considerable studies have investigated the process and underlying factors influencing the reception of medical innovation in modern China, visual sources have only been superficially analysed. The medical images in late Qing pictorials offer depictions of disease, healing process, and the doctor-patients relationship, claiming an “on-site authenticity” that both shocked viewers and challenged their original cognition frameworks. Additionally, the advent of new printing technologies, such as lithography, facilitated the reproduction and widespread distribution of numerous images that were previously confined to private collections. This paper endeavours to provide alternative insights into the role of visual culture in shaping historical perspectives on medicine and healthcare. It specifically explores how medical practices were visually represented, articulating the perception of Western medicine within the context of trans-cultural knowledge transfer. Through the meticulous analysis of both textual and visual elements in the pictorials, this study scrutinizes their impact on viewers. Furthermore, the paper attempt to explore the intersection of gender discourse, ethical discourse, and cultural values in the visual representation of Western medicine in these pictorials, shedding light on the intricate ways in which medical practices are embedded within larger socio-cultural contexts.

Boyao ZHANG (University of Toronto)

Abacus Calculation for the Ledgers of Industry: Commercial Numeracy and Everyday Clerical Labor in 20th-Century China, 1900s-1980s

This paper explores how modern industrial accounting transformed the use of the abacus in 20th-Century China. The abacus, or *suapan*, had traditionally been a means of numeracy for commercial clerks, who only needed to memorize a series of formulas to be able to work with numbers. However, the main drawback of the abacus was the extreme difficulty for novice learners to master multiplications and divisions on account of the numerous formulas that had to be memorized. To address the needs of modern accounting, 20th-century business professionals sought to create a new approach to abacus use that mirrored the mechanics of written arithmetic calculations without relying on rote memorization. This paper will argue that these new methods would transform the abacus into a calculative aid rather than a means of numeracy, as comprehension of written arithmetic would now be the precondition for abacus manipulation. In doing so, this paper sheds new light on the age-old debate between abacists and algorists. In the Chinese case, the abacists triumphed by capitulating to the principles of the algorists. The first section of this paper will survey the methods of abacus instruction among merchants and bookkeeping clerks in Late Imperial China. The second section will look at how accountants and business professionals in the first half of the 20th Century sought to phase out abacus formulas that they deemed useless. The final section will explore various experimentations with the technical design of the abacus and the instruction of abacus use that began during the Great Leap Forward and that reached a climax during the Cultural Revolution.



SINOPHONE WORLDS

SINOPHONE WORLDS

Wendong CUI (CUHK)

Bridging Literary Borders: The Young Lu Xun's Appropriation of German World Literature Sources

This paper meticulously examines how the young Lu Xun reshaped the Chinese literary landscape through his compilation of *Anthology of Fiction from Beyond the Border* (*Yuwai xiaoshuoji*, 1909), focusing on his revolutionary appropriation of German world literature sources. While *Anthology of Fiction* is widely acknowledged for its role in introducing global literary works to China, this paper offers a fresh perspective by highlighting the profound impact of German sources on Lu Xun's innovative practices. Illuminating the transformative influence of transcultural dynamics on Chinese literary modernity, this study diverges from conventional analyses by emphasizing the crucial role played by German materials in shaping Lu Xun's unique practice of introducing world literature. The first section delves into Lu Xun's deliberate adoption of the material format from "Aus fremden Zungen" (From Foreign Tongues, 1891–1910), an almost forgotten German literary monthly dedicated to showcasing world literature. The subsequent section scrutinizes Lu Xun's careful selection of titles from various book series, such as Reclam's Universal Bibliothek (Universal Library), known for their accessibility and inclusivity. Drawing inspiration from the physical format of "Aus fremden Zungen" and curating texts from series like Universal-Bibliothek, Lu Xun's anthology not only presented a unique perspective on world literature but also crafted an "unbalanced version" tailored specifically to Chinese readers. This innovative approach generated a dynamic interplay between cosmopolitanism and nationalism within the Chinese literary milieu, underscoring Lu Xun's profound impact on the convergence of global and local literary traditions.

Serena De Marchi (Stockholm University)

Family as a Contested Site of Memory: Historical Re-Tellings in Contemporary Taiwanese Family Novels

Family memories contribute to the re-telling of national history, but they also challenge the apparent homogeneity that official reconstructions inevitably bring with them. As a type of collective memory (Erl 2011), family memory is an interesting site of investigation where personal and collective processes of meaning-making merge, and sometimes collide. This contribution comparatively analyses two contemporary novels that memorialise Taiwan's White Terror by integrating national history with family memories and fictional narratives. Both Shawna Yang Ryan's *Green Island* and Ku Yu-ling's 顧玉玲 *Yu di 餘地* (*Margins*), published in 2016 and 2022 respectively, focus on the legacy that family secrets and family traumas – tied to the experience of political persecutions during the White Terror – have brought to the next generation, affecting family relations and characters' identity constructions. While different in form, style, structure, and even language, the two texts explore similar issues, such as: the way memory – especially in the form of inherited trauma – is carried through intergenerationally and transnationally; how family memory – which here is articulated in the form of absence, silence, and secrecy – brings about doubts and ambiguities that directly challenge institutionalised forms of memorialisation; how the institutionalisation of memory alone ultimately fails to offer a credible re-telling of the past, especially to the generations that have not lived through it. In this paper, while delving on all these aspects, I will also consider the contribution that family novels, as a literary genre, can bring to the reconstruction of national history, and how literature can be made part of public commemoration processes.

Simona Gallo (University of Milan)

Moving Borderlands: Contemporary Sinophone Poetry, the Global Network, and the Gravitational Pulls

In her book *Verses Going Viral*, Inwood asserts that modern poetry "is alive and well in twenty-first-century China," as demonstrated by the "wealth of poetry writing and related activities taking place daily on the Internet, in print publications, and at face-to-face events" (2014, 3). This is also true for the Sinosphere, even though contemporary Sinophone poetry still dwells in the periphery of the epistemic frame of Sinophone literary studies (see Gallo, *forthc.*; Klein, *forthc.*). A remarkable phenomenon has been taking place in Hong Kong, however, where a kaleidoscope of poetry scenes converges from a hybrid, polyphonic, and polymorphic Sinosphere. Is contemporary Sinophone poetry heading south? Can Hong Kong serve as a compass – a 指南針, that is – of Sinophone poetry in its global network? In an attempt to answer these questions, my contribution focuses on three literary journals mainly based in Hong Kong – *Pangolin House*, 聲韻詩刊/*Voice & Verse Poetry Magazine*, and *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal* – that, as I claim, epitomize the effort of (re)orienting and disseminating Sinophone poetry in translation, hence turning the island into a pivot of the global network. By giving vent to a vast array of places of production, ideological spaces, and linguistic identities across translanguaging, these bilingual journals stand as prominent gravitational forces, steering a "southern discourse," or better, a "lyrical dialogue from the south," around the multifarious lyrical shapes of Sinophone poetry, going beyond languages and localisms.

Helen Hess (University of Zurich)

Transgressing Boundaries in Contemporary Sinophone Literature and Film

The Taiwanese TV series *Bi'an zhi jia* 彼岸之嫁 (English title: *The Ghost Bride*), which was first released in 2020, is set in colonial Malacca in the late 19th century and tells the story of a young woman who is forced into marrying a deceased young man in order to save her father. Bullied by the ghost of her husband, the protagonist decides to take her faith into her own hands by travelling to the underworld – the world of the dead – to confront her husband. In *Bi'an zhi jia* there are various forms of crossing boundaries, most notably the protagonist's journey to the underworld and back, but also transgressions of socially and discursively constructed categorizations such as gender roles. Besides, with its plot being based on an English novel by Yangsze Choo, a Malaysian Chinese writer who lives in the USA, the Chinese-language Netflix production is an example of the transnational travel and interconnections of narratives across the cultural Sinosphere. This paper aims at analyzing how representations of the metaphysical realm in *Bi'an zhi jia* and other contemporary Sinophone literary and filmic narratives critically reflect on social and political issues, which Sinophone communities have been confronted with. It argues that these narratives offer blueprints for the coexistence of different communities, cultural practices, and role models in the contemporary Sinophone world.

Meng-Hao LI (University of Zurich)

Performing Memory, Staging History

Liyang Chien 簡莉穎 once expressed clearly that the main purpose of the historical background in her play should not be merely a piece of information giving facts or details about certain period; rather, it should be an element that can intersect with the present. Thus, Chien's intention is somehow in line with how Greek tragedy and Shakespeare's history plays engage with the representation of history, which believes that although the performance on stage represents the past, its aim is for present purposes. In this paper, I will explore two facets of Chien's *Dress in Code* 服妖之鑑: firstly, how does the perpetrator turn into a victim; Second, how do the victims turn into the perpetrators. My intention is that people might not occupy such a clear-cut role, either perpetrators or victims, under the authoritarian period (1949-1991). Finally, I argue that this play provides a good example of whether theatre can serve as a reminder of "never again;" it does not just re-enact what the past used to be, furthermore, it fully reflects the complexity of history by demonstrating the ambiguity of humanity. By doing so, this play, as Aristotle once mentions, shows us "the kind of thing that would happen" rather than merely "what actually happened." The effect of such theatrical representation of the past on audiences will generate an imaginative response which will strengthen the idea of "never again."

Chihho LIN (Academia Sinica)

Cross-Cultural Convergence: Zhang Guangyu's Fusion of Indian, Egyptian, and Mexican Art in Wartime China

This research explores *Manhua Journey to the West* (*Xiyou manji*, 1945), a series of illustrations by Zhang Guangyu (1900-1965), exemplifying transcultural flow in Chinese popular art in the first half of the twentieth century. Renowned for his expertise in graphic, furniture and costume design, Zhang was a pivotal figure in Shanghai's pictorial magazine circle. His work, crafted in Chongqing during wartime, employs the structure of the classic novel, *Journey to the West*, to critique the Nationalist regime. The series features sixty colored pieces, blending traditional Chinese motifs with Indian miniature painting, Mexican modernism, and ancient Egyptian art. This study explores Zhang's selection of visual elements, revealing how they reflect his artistic vision and echo Chinese intellectuals' perceptions of the historical and political contexts in India, Egypt, and Mexico, thereby influencing his diverse stylistic choices. While Zhang Guangyu's modernist illustration has received considerable scholarly attention, detailed analysis of his recontextualization of foreign artistic styles remains scarce. This research aims to unravel Zhang's motivations for incorporating these diverse cultural influences, contextualized against the backdrop of global political shifts and the development of modern art during the Republican era. It aims to deepen the understanding of how Zhang's employment of these international artistic elements extends beyond aesthetic preferences, illustrating a complex interaction with the intellectual discourse of his time, particularly focusing on the themes of nation-building and perceptions of civilization in the nations whose art he integrated.

Yang QU (Harvard University)

Becoming Xenophone: Singai Ma Elangkannan and the Religious Question in Sinophone Nanyang Literature

This paper delves into the intricate interplay between religious ideology and cultural identity within the Sinophone literary tapestry of Southeast Asia, spotlighting how Singaporean Tamil writer Singai Ma Elangkannan's novels challenge the secularist narrative. It emphasizes Elangkannan's portrayal of the sacred as an active force in shaping cultural identities, thereby contributing to a reconfigured understanding of modernity that transcends the secular confines traditionally associated with Sinophone literature. By examining his two most notable works *Path Discovered* and *The Waves*, the study highlights how Elangkannan's narratives complicate conventional dichotomous understandings of Chineseness and non-Chineseness, Sinophone and Xenophone, Sinitic and non-Sinitic, and posits challenges to the secular interpretations of identity through the lens of Tamil purist movements and religious practices. Capturing the variegated realities of Southeast Asia's pluralistic societies, these works illustrate complex processes of identity negotiation, characterized by a simultaneous de-Sinicization and Tamilization, which transcends the traditional secular paradigms of cultural identity. The paper further explores the broader implications of non-Sinitic literatures in the context of Sinophone studies, underscoring the necessity of acknowledging the nuanced and dynamic interactions between Chinese and other cultural identities, particularly as they are navigated and reimagined by minority communities. Elangkannan's narratives, it argues, reveal the potential of sacred traditions to assert cultural distinctiveness and influence within the predominantly secular Sinophone sphere, contributing to a post-secular reimagining of Chinese and Sinophone literary modernity.

Silvia Schiavi (Roma Tre University)

Memory of Colonialism in Taiwan's 1930s Surrealist Poetry: A Study of Yang Chichang and Li Zhangrui's Poems

Surrealism emerged in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial rule (1895-1945) through the endeavors of The Windmill poetry society, more commonly known as Le Moulin. Founded in Tainan in 1933 and led by Taiwanese poet Yang Chichang 楊熾昌 (1908-1994), the group brought together Taiwanese and Japanese poets, introducing Western and Japanese Surrealism to the local literary scene and initiating an indigenous modernist movement. Since the rediscovery of Le Moulin poetry society in the late 1970s, scholars have recognized the group's role in advocating for a novel poetic style in opposition to mainstream realist literature. However, it appears that the Taiwanese members of the society turned to Surrealism also as a means to evoke the trauma of colonialism. Amid the pure poetry encouraged by the group, which distances itself from political and social interference, subtle references to the hardships endured during Japanese rule emerge. These references are veiled behind images of violence, gloomy and desolate settings, and a pervasive sense of defeat and humiliation occasionally interwoven with romantic disappointment. Through an analysis of some of the most representative works by Yang Chichang and Li Zhangrui 李張瑞 (1911-1952) –another leading figure of the society– this contribution aims to illustrate how surrealist poetry might provide insights into the Japanese occupation period and contribute to the reconstruction of Taiwan's memory of colonialism.

Irmy Schweiger (Stockholm University)

“Who Says You Always Have to Look North?” Long Yingtai’s Southern World as Curative Space and Planetary Memory

This presentation challenges prevailing perspectives on the global south, steering away from conventional critiques of global capitalism and responses from marginalized communities. Instead, it explores the potential of the global south as a curative space and repository of planetary memory. Long Ying-tai 龍應台, former Minister of Culture and one of Taiwan’s most prominent and controversial public intellectual and critic, serves as a noteworthy case study. Engaging in a prolonged “retreat” in a southern Taiwanese fisher village, she produced her first novel *At the Foot of Mount Kavalungan* (大武山下, 2020), and an essay collection *Walking: A Practice of Solitude* (走路: 獨處的實現, 2022). In these works, the narrators embark on journeys to scrutinize and remedy their alienated relationships with themselves, others, and the world. Drawing upon sociologist Hartmut Rosa’s concepts of social acceleration, alienation, and resonance, as well as literary scholar Birgit Neuman’s theoretical framework of planetary memory, this presentation demonstrates how Long Ying-tai’s work transcends the highly politicized concept of the global south concept. Instead, it actively engages with the potential to build resonant relationships and articulate curative perspectives for our existence in the world.

Giorgio Strafella (Palacký University Olomouc)

Sinophone Art Criticism and Socially Engaged Art in Reform-Era China

The voices of art critics and historians have been largely overlooked by Anglophone scholarship on Chinese intellectual politics. How does Sinophone art criticism join broader intellectual debates? How does it articulate connections between contemporary art and socio-political issues? To answer these questions, this paper analyses key texts from the debate on the “sociological turn” in Chinese art that animated Sinophone art criticism during the early 2000s, including essays by Sun Zhenhua, Li Gongming and Yi Ying among others. This paper argues these art critics and historians placed new art in relation to recent intellectual currents to advance a new definition of socially engaged art that valorised public engagement, pluralism, and a “democratisation” of art. This new definition of socially engaged art emerged in explicit opposition to a Maoist politicization of art, as well as to the post-1978 embrace of “art for art’s sake.” This study will also argue that such definition also implicitly countered Western appreciations of contemporary Chinese art that centred critiques of official ideology and political satire, as opposed to societal issues. As a result, this study sheds light on an important moment in the contemporary history of Sinophone art criticism in its intellectual context.

Na YEN (Academia Sinica)

Fluid Boundaries of War Memories: Cross-Regional Evacuation Writings by Lingnan Female Writer Xian Yuqing during the Sino-Japanese War

The importance of female experiences in the history of war has garnered increasing attention within the research on war and gender. This research focuses on Xian Yuqing, a female intellectual from Macau, during the Sino-Japanese War period, who, while evacuating from Guangdong to Hong Kong and eventually returning to Macau, composed poetry and prose in a blend of classical and vernacular Chinese. The study examines how Southern female writers were compelled to traverse geographical boundaries during tumultuous times, attempting to transcend linguistic and cultural borders in their writings, thereby reflecting the dynamics of the Lingnan region. In the 1940s, Xian, with her background as a historian, deeply documented the chaotic social conditions during wartime in Lingnan region. After escaping Guangzhou, she expressed the experiences of air raids and evading military invasions through classical poetry, creating a fragmented urban spatial sense and forming an emotional community among evacuees with diverse cultural backgrounds. Examining Xian’s prose on the experiences of evacuating, Hong Kong and Macau once again served as places of refuge during the conflict. Many outsiders, considering Portugal’s non-participation in the war, prioritized seeking refuge in Macau. This study will further examine how Xian’s poetry and memoirs concurrently depict the lyrical nature of women’s personal memories during wartime, as well as provide a macroscopic exploration of the cultural exchange history among Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau. Additionally, the research will delve into a detailed analysis of how Xian’s works document the soundspace of war during the evacuation process, emphasizing the cultural heterogeneity inherent in the recorded experiences of displacement.



INTERDISCIPLINARY

INTERDISCIPLINARY

Martin Blahota (Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences)

Nostalgia for the Countryside in a Decadent City: A Case of Manchurian Literary Resistance to Western Imperialism

Scholars have already explored how nationalism and imperialism in modern China appropriate local space to assert authenticity. However, the links between local cultural authenticity and ideas of pan-Asianism in China have been overlooked so far. This paper focuses on representations of the homeland landscape in the works of Jue Qing 爵青 (1916-62), a writer from Manchukuo, where many authors embraced ideas of East Asian solidarity in the struggle against Western imperialism as promoted by the regime. Focusing specifically on Jue Qing's early short stories from the 1930s, "Guoji niang" 國際娘 (International Girl) and "Ha'erbin" 哈爾濱 (Harbin), the paper examines the ways in which the essentialised East Asian local is constructed in them in opposition to the Western urban capitalist milieu. Applying sociohistorical contextualization and close reading, the paper demonstrates that while Jue Qing presents the East Asian landscape as eternal and connected to the laws of nature, he sometimes parallels Western modernity with an uncivilized wilderness, thereby pointing to its decadence. In turn, this paper argues that Jue Qing's dichotomy of the idyllic countryside and the decadent city can be understood as a political protest against the modernity promoted by Western imperialism. This research opens up new possibilities for interpreting a range of other works from the 1930s and 1940s that tend to be read through the prism of nationalism, but which, on closer examination, appear to address not only national but also broader transnational forces.

Wan-Chun CHIU (National Taiwan University)

Weaving the Cosmos of Lotus Sutra: Fractal Narratives and Meta-Sutra

This paper explores how the Lotus Sutra motivates reader engagement and action through fractal narrative and self-referentiality. Firstly, it elucidates how the Lotus Sutra constructs a dynamically generated fractal universe by employing fractal features to unfold the Mahayana cosmos. By weaving narrative structures that exhibit characteristics such as self-similarity and self-repetition, borrowed from mathematical fractal structures, the text intricately weaves complex narrative patterns across different levels. Through a worldview encompassing myriad worlds and three thousand realms, and leveraging topological similarities across narrative layers, it constructs a mirrored, symmetrical, and iteratively recursive fractal universe schema, intertwining the textual world with reality to engage readers deeply. This unique cosmology is reflected not only in its proclaimed content but also seamlessly integrated into its form. Secondly, as "a sutra of narrating the formation of the sutra," the Lotus Sutra embodies the meta-sutra characteristic of simultaneous exposition and validation. Through self-referential narratives, it enhances the profound attraction of the text to readers. Unlike meta-fiction, which aims at revealing the fictitious nature of textual creation, a meta-sutra uses the narrative of Buddha's teachings to affirm the authority and sanctity of the scripture itself. The Lotus Sutra no longer simply refers to a reading text in the real world. Within the Lotus Sutra, the term "Lotus Sutra" signifies various polysemous symbols, including the textual "Lotus Sutra," the sutra spoken by Buddhas throughout myriad worlds, and the sutra to be worshiped and disseminated, operating on three distinct levels.

Linda Chu (Academia Sinica/National Taiwan Normal University)

Worldmaking “Proverbial” Metaphors: Powerful Association of the Human Experience Across the East and West in Late Imperial China

Synthesizing the ideas of philosopher Nelson Goodman (1906–1998) and literary scholar Liu Xie (ca. 465–522), worldmaking begins with interpreting the pattern of humankind. To explore how the sacred is (re)made through the literary, I turn to early humanistic works by Jesuit missionaries, especially Alfonso Vagnoni’s *Pixue (Science of Comparison, 1633)*. In this pioneering text on Western rhetoric, the first of its kind published in China, the interpretation of human patterns and language coincides through the metaphor, creating and recreating worlds. The Jesuits, aiming to establish Christianity in late imperial China, blended experiences from their European world with the newly discovered Chinese realm. Interweaving Chinese and European traditions, they recognized patterns across East and West, (re)inventing a realm where the sacred and secular engaged in dialogue through “proverbial” metaphors. This paper ventures to excavate representative Western metaphors and Chinese comparisons in the 601 transcribed aphorisms in the two-volume *Pixue* and explore how these traditions intersect transcultural tropes, offering a unique glimpse into one of the first times in history when Western and Chinese thought collided across boundaries. Many aphorisms incorporate ancient Greek and Roman figures and history while drawing deeply on Confucian and other Chinese classics and integrating Christian themes. These “proverbial” metaphors push boundaries in all senses of the word; this traversing and transcending of boundaries is the process through which worldmaking takes place. My paper will ultimately show how old worlds are challenged and new worlds are shaped through the imagination of Jesuits as they penned works such as *Pixue*.

Elizabeth Emrich-Rouge (University of Cambridge)

Popularising the Natural World: Landscape Woodcuts in the Pages of Taibai (太白, 1934-35)

China’s modern woodblock print movement of the 1930s, most well-known for its obviously political images of workers and the urban poor, also produced a surprising number of landscape images. Often showing bucolic hills, meadows, streams and peaceful agrarian scenes, these landscapes are confounding within the context of the woodcut movement’s stated aims for leftist revolutionary action. Interestingly, these landscape prints are also included as the majority of the illustrations in the journal *Taibai* 太白 (*Venus*, 1934-35), a publication founded to promote *baihuawen* (vernacular literature) and the popularisation of science. Edited by Chen Wangdao 陳望道 (1891-1977), *Taibai* was a representative publication of the League of Left-Wing Writers and furthermore, acted as a political counterpoint to Lin Yutang’s 林語堂 (1895-1976) journal *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*, 1932-40, 45-49) and its short-form essays. Strongly supported by the writer and iconoclast Lu Xun (1881-1936), who was also a pillar of support for the woodblock print movement, *Taibai* included landscape prints by artists like Liu Xian 劉峴 (1915-1990) and Hu Qiping 胡其萍 (dates unknown), who were simultaneously publishing much more overtly political images in other publications. Therefore, this paper argues that the landscape images in *Taibai* were, contrary to appearance, political as well. Rather than merely promoting ‘visual interest’ for the reader, I posit these prints were instead visualisations of *Taibai*’s stated aims of popularising science, part of their leftist political project.

Georgijs Dunajevs (University of Würzburg/National Library of Latvia)

Patterns of Metamorphoses in the Zhiguai xiaoshuo Tale

Transformation is a frequently encountered element of the Chinese classical tales of the strange (*zhiguai xiaoshuo*). Metamorphoses abound: from gods and ghosts assuming human appearance to the shape-shifting foxes, tigers, badgers, and scores of other were-animals; to objects coming to life after hundreds of years of accumulating vital essence. Common knowledge of the Chinese pantheon of strange creatures tends to oversimplify the characteristic properties of the transformation process, such as that fox spirits only turn into succubae-like beautiful maidens. A more in-depth analysis of the *zhiguai xiaoshuo* tradition reveals that in the tales, anything practically can turn into anything, which proposes the question: is there a pattern to these metamorphoses? In this paper, I will adopt a more distant-reading perspective of the *zhiguai xiaoshuo* tales featuring the transformation motif. Using statistical methods and data visualisation tools, I will attempt to discover whether there exist patterns to the transformations of various characters commonly found in those tales, with an emphasis on animals and objects, and to what extent these patterns interrelate with one another. The obtained results will be discussed and compared with conclusions from related studies on the transformation motif across various genres of the Chinese literary tradition, such as by Wolfram Eberhard, Rupert D. Jameson, and Charles Hammond.

Horst Fabian (Independent researcher)

From Stability to Regression: Did the Institutionalization Paradigm Lead Us Astray?

Political institutionalization has been the dominant paradigm used to interpret China's political development during the so-called "reform and opening up" period (1978-2012). Many researchers considered it an important explanation for China's political and economic exceptionalism, which helped explain the autocratic resilience of the Communist party state. In my paper I argue that we must reconsider our assumptions – expressed or implicit – regarding the political development since 1978 in light of the political regression under Xi Jinping. Several recent contributions from China and comparative research have questioned the dominant paradigm of successful political institutionalization (Shih, Torigian, Fewsmith, Fitzgerald et al). This paper examines the conceptual and framing deficits in the institutionalization paradigm. This paradigm often adheres to the official narrative of political institutionalization that emphasizes balancing intra-party relations and preventing destructive conflicts such as those during the Cultural Revolution. To understand the reform period, it might be better to consider the dual state concept developed by E. Fränkel. The purpose of this paper thus is to examine what kind of institutionalization took place. Between 1978 and 2012, what did political institutionalization really accomplish? In the end, didn't political institutionalization not only fail but also prove incompatible with an intransparent, irresponsible Leninist party state that usurps and monopolizes the mandate to represent the nation without democratic accountability?

Andreas Fulda (University of Nottingham)

Germany's Entanglement with Autocratic China: How Foreign Policy Paradigms Morphed into Dogma

For decades, German foreign policy research has maintained a distance from the political process. An unwritten norm has long existed among German IR experts discouraging criticism of political decision-makers in Berlin. A prevalent perception paradigm has furthermore prioritized understanding China itself, while neglecting the impact of unconditional China engagement on German actors. In my paper I will challenge this approach by following a relational science framework and analyzing Germany's multi-faceted interactions with China in the realm of politics, economics and society. I deconstruct three dominant foreign policy paradigms—Change through Rapprochement, Change through Trade, and Rapprochement through Interweaving. My analysis reveals that these paradigms gradually morphed into dogma. Drawing on examples of policy failure in the fields of industry, development aid, dual use technology and academia, I show how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has actively manipulated behaviour among German actors. My research reveals that CCP interference was aided by strategic blindness and the illusion of control on the German side. My paper offers a cautionary tale for other democracies navigating engagement with autocratic regimes. It concludes with suggestions for a more robust German strategic culture which prioritizes critical self-reflection and aims to foster democratic resilience.

Mariia Guleva (Charles University Prague)

Visualising Paradoxes: Good Atom and Bad Atom in Chinese Cartoons of the 1950s

In the visual vocabulary of Chinese cartoons of the 1950s, the "atomic bomb" was a recurring attribute of an "American imperialist," be it a politician or an army general, while the "atomic whirl" became a code for science and mighty energies harnessed for the benefit of humankind. Such schematic depictions featured regularly in central and local newspapers, big character papers, and magazines—of the latter, most prominently *Manhua* 漫画 (*Cartoon*), published in 1950–1960. The visual narration of "atomic age" challenges combined the clichéd images to familiarise the audiences with several contradictory ideas: that "American imperialists" with their A- and H-bombs were "paper tigers," and yet that victims of nuclear bombs and tests were numerous; that capitalist "warmongers" spread atomic danger over Western Europe and Japan, whereas nuclear power plants in the hands of socialist government brought light and prosperity to the people, and yet that workers and peasants in China needed all their inventiveness to produce the plainest tools for their daily labour. I propose to comb through the paradoxical co-existence of these ideas by analysing the condensed and exaggerated images of nuclear power in *Manhua* cartoons. The focal question is: what devices did the magazine apply to visualise the invisible and to explain the unfamiliar to its readers? I claim that *Manhua*'s page layouts, cartoon allocations, the typographic choices, and the range of tropes were instrumental for masking contradictions brought by changes in the news about international circumstances or ideological shifts.

Chi HU (Academia Sinica)

Embodying “Embodiment”: The Writings of Emperor Wu of Liang’s Sutra Expounding Ceremony

This paper focuses on the concept of “embodiment” to explore the significance of “Wen” (patterns/etiquette/writing) in rituals. The particular case this paper investigates is the Sutra expounding ceremony of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* conducted by Emperor Wu of Liang in the fifth year of Zhongdatong (中大通). Previous research on rituals has provided extensive analysis of the texts recited during the ceremonies and the symbolic mechanisms of ritual procedures. Built on this foundation, this paper aims to further investigate the writings that report and praise the ceremony, such as the “Preface to the Imperial Lecture” (御講序) and the “Great Dharma Hymn” (大法頌), in comparison with texts that record the content of the lectures, such as the “Preface to the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*” (發般若經題). This paper explains how the interpretation of textual meanings can lead to distinctly different symbolic significances embodied in ritual performances and explores how rituals transform values into a performance that aims to enable participants to feel, understand, and internalize them. Furthermore, this paper emphasizes that if the function of rituals is to “embody” values and orders, then ritual writings also serve to “embody” the rituals. These writings not only guide readers to notice important clues within the intricate and similar ritual procedures but also evoke corresponding associations and feelings. By weaving the ritual into different contexts, the writings transform the ritual into new symbols that encapsulate the political events and value choices of the Emperor Wu of Liang.

Sascha Klotzbücher (Comenius University, Bratislava)

Saying the Unspeakable: Unmasking Power Dynamics in Embedded Research in Autocratic Environments

Embedded research can be defined as the practices and outcomes of scholarly inquiry in which researchers maintain a willingness to subordinate themselves to a local and exclusionary host in exchange for privileged inclusion, useful insights, exchanges and/or invaluable data. Chinese state actors restrict access to data and the field while encouraging forms of embeddedness in orchestrated partnerships. The hidden assumption in Chinese studies is that one’s embeddedness will be overlooked or ignored. Or, if not ignored, this bias of embedded research can be minimised, but how? One indicator of embedded research is a tactical withdrawal from or the emergence of “sensitive issues.” As metacommunicative interventions in the field or in an ongoing discussion/thought, references to “that’s sensitive!” points stop or change the conversation. In an ambivalence between our self-perception as researchers who can say anything and the voluntary concessions for data, self-censorship is a non-professional coping strategy of a hidden denial of these interventions of political sensitivity. Based on a social experiment conducted by the Talking Lab in November 2023 on family histories during the Cultural Revolution, my paper will discuss the methodological “irritations” of overcoming and dealing with what is perceived as sensitive or unsayable. I will analyse two methods of altering relations: First, retelling what is tabooed or censored from a different perspective, and second, triangulating the social role of the researcher to look at the case anew.

Julius Kochan (University of Oxford)

De-mapping in the Digital Age: Unmappable Places in Contemporary Chinese Prose Fiction

The last 30 years have seen the Chinese National Space Administration develop and implement its own satellite navigation system, BeiDou. The capacity to map territory digitally and monitor movement through it constitutes one of the hallmarks of the digital age that China, along with the rest of the world, finds itself in. In this same period there has been a proliferation of experimental prose writing by Chinese authors that describes places which resist mapping. The site that Gao Xingjian renders in his short story ‘Buying a Fishing Rod for my Grandfather’ (1989) is an impressionistic locus, a composite of the place of the narrator’s childhood and the ‘modernised’ site that has replaced it. The characters in Can Xue’s ‘Tea Garden’ (2020) navigate without reference to maps; they orient themselves on the basis of embodied spatial memory. Su Tong’s ‘Empty Handed’ (1991) features a place that is not to be found on the map and that one can only reach when lost. It would be impossible to map these places on paper, let alone transpose them into the infosphere’s maps. This paper will examine the connection between the unmappability of the places described in these literary texts and the concurrent mapping and digitalisation of space. If, as Jean Baudrillard suggests in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), the map has superseded the physical space that was once primary, then it may be that the writing of these unmappable literary places could be seen as an alternative way of conceptualising space.

Fu-ming LEE (National Taiwan University)

Readers' Anxiety: Fan Mail and Lay Publication in 1930s China

The sentiment “reading without writing is in vain” expressed in a 1934 reader’s letter to an influential Chinese magazine reflects the anxieties of readers regarding their creative potential. This sentiment was not unique; numerous readers shared a growing desire for public exposure, propelled by the proliferation of easily accessible published materials. However, what does the expectation for public exposure reveal about the collective mindset of the readers? Does the increasing vocalization of readers actually turn them into an integral silent majority, merely those who “read” and not who “write”? What role do readers play in the vast readership, and what is their imagined concept of “writing”? This paper shifts the discussion perspective from a writer-centric view, which dominates current discourse in the modern history of Chinese literature, to explore the proactive involvement and collective public characteristics of “readers.” Drawing insights from popular publications such as *Shen Bao* and *Liangyou*, this study first analyzes the behavioral patterns and exposure attitudes of reader submissions; subsequently, based on reader-contributed publications like *Dushu yuekan* and *Duzhe yuekan* from the Guanghua Bookstore, as well as “Unknown Writer Special Issues” from *Xinshidai* magazine in the early 1930s, it investigates readers’ aspirations for creative publication and their dissatisfaction with contemporary Chinese publishing culture. As a whole, this paper examines the culture of reader communication in modern China from the perspectives of reading history, reflecting on the interplay between reading and writing, as well as the cultural dynamics among readers, authors, and publishing houses.

Haozhen LI (University of Tartu)

Animal Spirits in North and Northeast China: Historical and Primary Sources

Worship of several particular animal spirits is the basis of a series of folk beliefs and shamanic behaviours in north and northeast China. These animal spirits, among which the most representative ones are fox and Siberian weasel, play different roles, such as patron deity of family or source of the supernatural power of spiritual mediums. This folk belief, though having escaped the attention of the mainstream culture, contributes a notable part of the daily religious life in the mentioned area. The earliest records of this folk belief can be dated back to the late 17th century, while its active practitioners and adherents can still be observed in my fieldwork. This paper will focus on different features and characters of these animal spirits in different narratives, such as records scattered across various genres of historical texts, previous ethnographic research from the early 20th century to recent years, and narratives collected from own informants. In these narratives, animal spirits could be silent outsiders, generous savers, arbitrary stressors, close family members, worshipped deities, righteous mentors, indifferent cooperators or marginalised assistants. By analysing these various features and characters, I will also attempt to discuss how sociocultural contexts and personal intentions of the narrators influence the narratives and how this traditional folk belief maintains its vitality through different eras and social environments.

LI Ren-Yuan (Academia Sinica)

Inventing Reading Methods in China from the 11th to the 14th Century

Since the 11th century, Chinese scholars have employed the term “dushufa,” meaning “method of reading books,” to describe specific approaches for collecting and organizing textual information from books, often linked to renowned scholars or “the ancient people.” The discourse on correct reading methods intensified over subsequent centuries, particularly among Neo-Confucian scholars. In the late 13th century, disciples of Zhu Xi (1130-1200) compiled volumes of conversation, with two specifically labeled as *dushufa*. Simultaneously, another group of disciples compiled *Master Zhu's Method of Reading*, delineating six principles based on Zhu Xi’s words on reading. In the early 14th century, Cheng Duanli (1271-1345), an academy leader, compiled a handbook for reading, claiming roots in Zhu Xi and previous scholars. This influential handbook offered comprehensive instructions, including reading lists for different ages, daily schedules, forms to supervise reading progress, and techniques for copying texts or making notes. From random discussions and Master’s six principles to organized instructions, Chinese scholars emphasized the importance of correct reading methods, advocating for reader education. This paper explores the historical significance of this discourse, partly in response to information overload from the widespread circulation of woodblock-printed books since the 11th century. As more people accessed textual information, the need for systematic reading methods became apparent. Neo-Confucian scholars believed in the importance of individuals learning the correct way to read and understand the words of the sages by themselves. The development of this discourse transformed reading into an act not only for acquiring information but also for self-cultivation. The legacy includes the term “dushuren,” literally “men who read books,” signifying individuals with not just reading skills but also carrying moral and cultural implications.

Xiaoqiao LING (Arizona State University)

The Beginning of a Reading Tradition: Encyclopedic Learning in the 1499 Hongzhi Xixiang ji

This paper studies the “marvelous annotations” in the earliest extant edition of *The Story of the Western Wing* (*Xixiang ji*), printed in the Hongzhi era from early 1499. These are clusters of explanatory notes on phrases extrapolated from the arias introduced by cartouches reading “Explanation of Meaning” (*shiyi*, hereafter Explanation). These cartouches punctuate the entire play in varying intervals, containing notes that do not so much provide semantic glossing as the “sources” of the phrases, citing more than 130 titles that cover the full spectrum of traditional Chinese textual production: Confucian classics, history, religion (especially Buddhist teachings), fine literature, and casual records of individual authors typically known as *biji*. Strwn throughout the book between arias and dialogues, these glosses allow readers to leave the immediate context of the play to browse, in a spatial sense marked by cartouches, a library hidden beneath the surface of the play. Modern critics have not been impressed with this ostensible display of erudition, mostly because Explanation does not follow a standard format when citing sources. The 130 titles are a medley of abbreviated book titles, authorial names, or loose citations of individual literary pieces. They also find the “sources” irrelevant to the dramatic context of the play. Yet the apparent editorial desire to display a comprehensive learning resonates with the exegetical tradition of classics, which are not literary works to be appreciated on their own, but rather offer each textual moment as the sage’s instantiation of the universal law in the cosmos that demands a firm grasp of classical learning to fully comprehend. This exegetical tradition also pits the classics to readers’ internalized repertoire of knowledge that constitutes their life-long pursuit of learning as self-cultivation. Situated at the beginning of a reading tradition of *The Western Wing*, the “marvelous annotations” therefore points toward the encyclopedic learning that predated the perception of *The Western Wing* as a dramatic text for performance.

LUO Yifei (Shanghai Normal University)

“The Journey” of the Landscape: British Missionary Edward Selby Little and “Guling Style” of Architecture and Plant in Lushan Mountain

British missionary Edward Selby Little (1864-1939) arrived in China in 1886 and moved to Lushan Mountain in Jiangxi Province in 1892. During his time in Lushan, Little made a significant impact by introducing a distinctive architectural and plant style that drew inspiration from Western architectural elements and plant designs. This innovative approach transformed the landscape and plant diversity of Lushan Mountain, leaving a lasting impression on the region’s aesthetics and natural environment. As a result, the region became a unique destination that showcased an extraordinary harmony between man-made structures and the breathtaking beauty of nature. The kind of mountain-forest city pattern designed by Little, famous for its ideal combination of natural scenery and human habitats, is named “Guling (Cooling) Style” after the town that Little developed. This paper uses an anthropological and sociological methodology to study the history and relationship between the British missionary Little and the landscape style of Lushan Mountain in modern times in China. This paper also examines the historical facts of cultural mobility brought about by human factors in cross-cultural communication. By tracing the social activities and social communication of Little in modern China, Britain and New Zealand, and the landscape planning of the architecture and plant in Lushan Mountain, as well as the cultural journey of this landscape style in the world, this paper strives to explore the influence of individual people’s social communication on different cultures in the process of cultural exchanges and the circulation of knowledge and things.

Šárka Masárová (Charles University Prague)

Nuclear Poetry from PRC after 1964

After the first nuclear test in the PRC in 1964 both new poetry (*xinshi* 新诗) and old-style poetry (*jiushi* 旧诗) related to this topic and addressing various facets of this issue started to appear. However, there has not been much research undertaken in this field so far. The term “nuclear poetry” in English is often connected with the final phase of WWII in East Asia or nuclear power during the Cold War, whereas in Chinese this term is not used. In general terms, Chinese poetry that explicitly refers to nuclear power and nuclear weapons tends to exalt them and perceives them as an essential part of the country’s security and as a peacekeeper. This paper aims to look into the works of several Chinese poets who have published nuclear poetry and compare their imagery on nuclear power, especially how both interior and international affairs are projected into this type of poetry, and how it interplays with the country’s ideology. Among the poets selected is a remarkable contemporary Chinese poet and calligrapher Zhang Wenxiang 张文祥 who has written a series of regulated poems on nuclear power in the old style during the escalation of the War in Ukraine since February 2022 and elaborated on this topic.

Olga Mazo (Tel Aviv University)

Chenghuang and Tudi in Medieval Chinese Texts

Tudi 土地, the genius loci, and his superior *Chenghuang* 城隍, or the City God, played an important role in the life and afterlife of the people. On the one hand, they were responsible for the peace and prosperity of the people in a particular place, and on the other hand, they were closely connected with the underworld. In this paper, I will discuss who and how could obtain the positions of these gods and analyse their relationships with each other, other spirits and people of different social statuses. Another interesting aspect is the interaction with magic specialists and Buddhist monks, as well as the families of *Tudi* and *Chenghuang*. The research is mainly based on the texts from the Song-Tang period, but some texts from the Ming and Qing periods are also used.

Anne Nestor (University of Tartu)

Divine Consultation and Entrepreneurship in Taiwan: The Practice of Involving Gods in Business Decision-making and Management

The research report explores the influence of supernatural beings, particularly gods, on Taiwanese residents’ daily lives and decision-making. Grounded in the rich tapestry of religious practices and beliefs permeating the island, the study delves into the complexities of how individuals interpret and interact with gods, particularly in business decisions and management. As Taiwan is home to a high density of small businesses, the involvement of gods in business decisions becomes an intriguing and relevant area of study. During the fieldwork conducted in 2023, face-to-face interviews in Taiwan and online questionnaires were utilised to gain valuable insights into the beliefs and practices of the people in the area. The study takes an original approach by drawing on the theoretical framework of vernacular religion developed by Leonard Primiano. It was found that while the involvement of gods in business decision-making and management is a popular and widespread practice among Taiwanese residents, the motivations and interpretations behind seeking divine help reveal a multiplicity of expressions and interpretations.

Alevtina Solovyeva (University of Tartu)

The ‘Living Dead’ in Taiping guangji and Other Chinese Sources: Typology, Beliefs, Functions

The “living dead” is a popular and internationally diverse notion of beliefs, narratives and practices. The report explores this notion in the Chinese cultural environment and focuses on typology, functions, and beliefs connected to the motif of the revived deceased. Following early records and some modern sources, we attempt to figure out how and why, according to beliefs, the deceased might come back to ordinary living people. In the report, we will look at the common and specific motifs of narration about the “living dead” and their textual and contextual features. The “living dead” involves numerous beliefs and interpretations concerning the nature of soul(s) and body existences, the afterlife, cosmography of the universe and another world, and ties between the human and non-human. These topics got significant attention and elaboration in various Chinese teachings, vernacular theories and practices. The report discusses some interpretations of the “living dead” and its place in Chinese epistemologies. The research is based on the corpus of narratives from the *Taiping guangji* and involves parallels from other sources, mediaeval and modern. The diachronic comparative aspect allows us to reveal the dynamics of generic and semantic features of narratives about the “living dead,” and the beliefs they are rooted in, that refer to Chinese philosophies and everyday life practices. In the report, we also consider the “living dead” as an expression of the Chinese “extraordinary” and regard its place in a taxonomy of *zhiguai* 志怪, and in relation to other supernatural beings.

Mart Tšernjuk (University of Tartu)

Supernatural in the Zhuangzi

Zhuangzi 莊子 is renowned for its wide and diverse selection of historical and fictional characters. This paper will focus on their supernatural aspect. The term *zhiguai* 志怪 itself, which can be translated as “[telling the] supernatural”, originates from *Zhuangzi*. Moreover, one of the earliest descriptions of immortality in Chinese literature can be found in the *Zhuangzi*. This paper aims to introduce supernatural beings from the book and analyse their roles and purposes within the broader framework of *Zhuangzi*’s philosophy. In addition to immortals, the book also contains many stories of recluses and hermits, often considered great Masters. The paper describes and explores the (teaching) methods used by these Masters. Furthermore, it delves into ritual specialists or shamans (*wu* 巫), known for their technical expertise and abilities to interact with divinities. Finally, the paper examines the significant role played by craftsmen in ancient Chinese society. In many ways, they were similar to shamans and ritual specialists due to their extraordinary skills and close connection to nature and the divine.

Lauren Walden (Birmingham City University)

Living Landscapes: Avant-Garde Animism and the Southwestern Art Research Group (1986-1989)

Following the extreme suppression of religious beliefs during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), a surge of spirituality exuded resistance amongst 1980s Chinese avant-garde artists, particularly the ‘Southwestern Art Research Group’ in Yunnan province. Granted access to foreign art movements through periodicals, a triangulated form of influence between Latin American Magical Realism (spirituality integrated into daily life), Western Surrealism (dreams and distortions) and indigenous animist belief systems characterised the group’s work. Mao Xuhui revealed resonances with Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and Diego Riviera’s murals. Zhang Xiaogang couched René Magritte as his ‘soulmate’ whilst acknowledging Frida Kahlo and the Yi People of Daliang Mountain in Yunnan province. Imbuing the Yunnanese landscape with metaphysical power overturned Maoist-era socialist realism. Mao Xuhui regularly featured the landscape of Dongchuan and Mount Gui, situated 150 kilometres from Kunming, its red soil coloured by copious deposits of iron and copper. In Mao’s *Call of Mother of Red Earth* (1986) a multi-limbed tree goddess is represented as part of the natural environment, ensconced limbs doubling as tree branches, a hybrid being reminiscent of Western Surrealism. Zhang depicts animist beliefs in his *Lost Dream* (1986-1987) series featuring mountain and tree-spirits alongside semi-nude indigenous women whose facial features are distorted in a Picasso-esque manner. Regarding the Yi People, Zhang stated they ‘no longer worried about life’s problems, life became a boat ride to the ‘other shore.’ As such, cross-cultural living landscapes formed a painterly repository of spiritual existence which symbolised the relative societal freedoms of 1980s China.

Xiaoyu XIA (Princeton University)

Beyond Redaction: The Art of Reading Blanks in 1930s China

This paper explores the emergence of a new art of reading in 1930s China. With the Nationalist government’s intensifying censorial control over local publications, blank spaces proliferated in Chinese newspapers. Customarily referred to as *tianchuang* (literally “skylight windows”), these blank spaces bore witness to the textual violence inflicted by censors. Yet, rather than precluding any possibility of reading, these reactionary practices, I argue, gave birth to a variety of reading strategies, in turn cultivating a subversive and self-reflexive readership. Through my analysis of the satirical representations of *tianchuang* in newspaper commentaries and commercial fiction, this paper demonstrates the expressive and interpretive capacities of these blank spaces induced by censorship. The varying shapes and shifting connotations of redaction, I suggest, constituted an integral part of the often-celebrated diversity of 1930s Chinese literature. By challenging the dominant fatalist characterizations of censorship as a mere suppression of readerly freedom, this paper seeks to rediscover an alternative ethics and politics of reading with—as well as against—the grain of censorial powers.

ZHANG Lu (University of Nottingham)

A Tale of Two Cities 1935 from Shanghai to London, the International Exhibition of Chinese Art as a Transcultural Intellectual Transmission

The 1935-36 International Exhibition of Chinese Art at Burlington House, the Royal Academy of Arts, London, supported by the British and Chinese governments, was a blockbuster event uniting Shanghai and London, two bustling metropolises standing on the two ends of Eurasia. Amidst intersecting political, historical, and cultural elements, it represented internationalism in interwar Britain. More significantly, it allowed China to showcase its ancient heritage as a means of presenting its new and modernised image. Simultaneously, the Shanghai Preliminary Exhibition ignited Chinese nationalism and early discussions on cultural heritage preservation. Drawing from extensive archives and historical photographs in Britain, mainland China, and Taiwan, this paper examines the event as a transcultural intellectual exchange, analyzing negotiation, curation, installation, representation, and art mobility. The exhibition served as an outreach to demonstrate China’s soft power and enhance Western understanding of its culture. It also promoted the modernization and canonization of Chinese national art, centered in Shanghai. This paper explores the relationship between Shanghai and London in the 1930s, characterized by a nuanced interplay of collision, mutual appreciation, and recognition through literary and artistic exchanges, and urban cultures. It also argues the de-contextualization and re-contextualization of Chinese art in 1935 and beyond transforming it into politicized symbols, leading to a legitimacy battle over ownership of Chinese “national treasures” and infusing the objects with new cultural and political significance. Ultimately, this paper unfolds a piece of history on integration and separation, memory and forgetting, with the 1935 Exhibition as a *lieu de mémoire*.

ZHANG Xinwei (University of Helsinki)

A New Approach to Anti-Colonialism – A Case Study of Bubble Tea

Bubble tea is today a worldwide phenomenon. Starting in Taiwan in the 1980s, this way of combining tea and multiple other ingredients, such as milk, tapioca, and various sweet materials, is today expanding all over the world (Anon 2020; Tür, 2020). Bubble tea began as a new style of making tea (Van Driem 2019). It constituted a revolutionary break with very long-standing Chinese tea practices, by adding milk and multiple types of sweeteners to tea, in ways that were unthinkable in the austere and highly ritualised traditional Chinese tea culture. However, the tea-drinking habit of adding milk and sugar to tea was first started by the Dutch in Europe (Feng 2014), who brought the dairy industry to Taiwan during colonial times, developing it in the local. It somehow changed the local tea-drinking way. Bubble tea was therefore an expression of a modernizing break with tradition, as well as a market-driven innovation pioneered by small-scale, independent entrepreneurs. This paper will explore the history of bubble tea to argue that bubble tea is a product in the post-colonial, to some extent, its invention shows the path of how the colonial ‘leftover’ could be created into a new product by local people from different communities.



POSTER SESSION

POSTER SESSION

Markéta Koklarová (Palacký University Olomouc)

Militarization of the Narrative in Film Adaptations of the Legend of Mulan

The poster will focus on film adaptations of the *Ballad of Mulan*. Until today, more than 20 films have been made with Mulan as the main protagonist. Over the twentieth century, the legend of Mulan has undergone an apparent transformation. This formerly devoted daughter has become a symbol of nationalism in Chinese society, and according to Louise Edwards, Mulan's virtue of filial piety became militarized and increasingly associated with service to the country. (2016, 27) The poster will demonstrate that nationalism and state militarism were further deepened in five Chinese 2020 adaptations, which were made in response to the release of the American film *Mulan* (2020) by Walt Disney Studios. A comparison of how militarization and nationalism manifest in the plotlines of selected adaptations will be shown, and the prevailing discourse will be identified.

Helena Motoh (Science and Research Centre Koper), Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik (University of Ljubljana), and Tina Berdajs (University of Ljubljana/ZRS Koper)

Researching Chinese Collections in Slovenia

The poster presents the research work of a group of researchers that started in 2018 and has focused on identifying and analysing Chinese collections and objects in Slovenia. In the first years, we started by identifying Chinese objects in Slovenian museums, and their collectors, analysing their provenance and other characteristics. During this phase of research, an online database was established where Chinese objects are presented along with curated content, online exhibitions, blogs, interactive online presentations, etc. In the next stage, the research then analysed smaller collections and individual objects, especially the “orphaned” objects separated from their original collections for historical reasons. Three main topics were the history of the Chinese objects from Slovenian castles/manors, the objects collected by sailors, and the objects confiscated from private owners during and after WWII. The research of Chinese collections and “orphaned” Chinese objects emphasized the importance of object mobility, mapping the routes and networks during the last two centuries. The impact of these collections on the local population is also being addressed, especially in the current phase of the research, where the largest Chinese collection, that of Ivan Skušek Jr., is focused on. The research now focuses on the period when the collection was displayed in a private apartment of its owners, functioning as an informal museum and a hub for information about China for Slovenian and foreign intellectuals and artists. In the next three years, this phase of research will finish with the establishment of a VR museum of the whole collection.

Tao SUN (CeTHiS)

Accommodating Travellers on Missions: Post Houses as Rest Stations in Ancient China During the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 BC–220 AD)

The Chinese empire under the Qin and Han dynasties (221 BC to 220 AD) had a complete bureaucratic system which included the services of post offices and official hotels. In general, the latter are mentioned together in current studies because they are closely linked: the same administrative management, operation dependent on the official road network and often shared staff. The official hotel services had their own missions, quite distant from the ancient post office. All of these services had their own name “chuanshi” (传食), which already marks the definition as well as the missions of the system: This is the network of small hotels housed in large postal stations, managed by the imperial administration throughout the territory of the empire. Accommodation, catering and transport services were provided to travelers under permits such as civil servants on mission, ambassadors of dependent states, and possibly their processions, among others. After studying our sources, we can see that, firstly, the system of official hotels is a governor's tool used by the central court of the Chinese Empire, in order to properly control its officials on mission; Second, the operation, including the services provided, is strictly regulated by law, which all officials must comply with; finally, services are offered to beneficiaries according to their levels in the hierarchy, the higher they are classified, the better services they will have received.

Renata Vinci (University of Palermo), Victoria Almonte (Tuscia University), Federica Casalin (Sapienza University of Rome), and Miriam Castorina and YU Yating (University of Florence)

The Mediterranean Through Chinese Eyes (MeTChE): An Analysis Based on Geographical and Travel Sources from the Song to Qing Dynasties (960–1911)

In the light of the geographical, historical, political and symbolic importance of the Mediterranean, both for the ancient and modern world, this region among lands, perceived as the cradle of Europe (Matvejevic 1999: 10), has been lived upon and narrated for centuries as a “transcultural space,” a liquid region that embraces many peoples, cultures and economies, which cannot be enclosed by the traditional concept of national borders (Abulafia 2011: xxiii; Braudel 1985: 8). Relying on the theoretical approach provided by Mediterranean studies, this project intends to investigate the Chinese perception of the Mediterranean area from the Song era to the Qing dynasties (960–1911) in geographical works and travelogues. Searching for representations of common traits that gather the Mediterranean civilisations, instead of dealing with single countries and national identities, its main objects are to: 1) identify to what extent the Chinese perception of the Mediterranean Sea reflected the idea of plurality and transculturality, 2) assess through which channels the Mediterranean came to be described and perceived as a “transcultural space” by tracing back the origin of the formation of such impressions in previous geographical sources (Arabs and European); in doing so, it also proposes to: 3) build a preliminary platform of knowledge on Chinese impressions of the Mediterranean in imperial time to be shared with the international scholarship, and 4) enhance the understanding of the historical background for the present economic, political and cultural relations, as to promote a positive dialogue between the two poles of the Eurasian continent.



PANEL ABSTRACTS

PANELS ABSTRACTS

LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Chiara Bertulesi (University of Milan)

Discourse and Representations of China in the Chinese Media

China's official media have long been regarded by the political leadership as essential tools for the so-called "correct guidance of public opinion" (正确舆论导向). Since Xi Jinping came to power, much emphasis has also been placed on the media's role in "telling China's stories well" (讲好中国故事), promoting a positive and "correct" representation of the country both domestically and internationally (Xinhua 2016). Moreover, in today's rapidly evolving and increasingly diverse media and digital landscape, these tasks are shared between traditional media and other digital platforms (Creemers 2017). Based on these premises, this panel brings together contributions analyzing the media representations of China and issues with particular significance in contemporary Chinese society, also in terms of political legitimacy and public consensus. These include AI, economics, environmental protection, heroes' representation, international relations, language, and science and technology. The papers focus on the discourse conveyed by Chinese- and English-language PRC newspapers, media outlets, and digital institutional platforms, as well as non-Chinese media from a comparative perspective. Sharing the notion of "discourse" as a starting point (Lams 2012), the papers employ theoretical frameworks and methodologies drawing from (critical) discourse analysis, frame analysis, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics. The panel aims to contribute to the discussion on how Chinese media construct and consolidate specific narratives about China and its current challenges, targeting both domestic and international audiences.

Hsiang-Yin Sasha CHEN (Academia Sinica)

Comparative Analyses of Cross-lingual and Ideological Narratives in Contemporary China

This panel investigates the use of language in ideological narratives, including posters, slogans, propaganda, commentaries, and discourses in contemporary China. Hsiang-Yin Sasha Chen traces the origin of the use of political terms, slogans, and posters from the Soviet Cultural Revolution and demonstrates their localization in contemporary China. Although the use of language in Communist ideology during and after the Chinese Cultural Revolution was mostly influenced by the Soviet Union, John Gregory's research argues that Chinese political scientists, commentators, and citizens on 21st-century social media have learned how to mimic Taiwanese modernity and performed as critical modern citizens when they comment on Taiwanese politics. The paper by Lillian Li-Hsing Ho further shows how the Chinese Communist Party inherited the language used to discredit opponents during the Cultural Revolution, applying the political tactics termed "demonizing democracy" as a series of propaganda discourses to interfere with the Presidential Election in Taiwan in 2024.

Yating YU (University of Florence)

Circulation and Reconfiguration of Knowledge: On Ideology, Geography, and Language in Chinese and Korean Texts (1815-1937)

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Jesuit missionaries introduced Christianity, Western science and the humanities to China and Korea, with a significant impact on both. During the mid-Qing dynasty, Korean scholars such as Hong Daeyong (홍대용, 洪大容; 1731-1783) interacted with missionaries in China, further facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas. However, both China and Korea faced the dual challenges of Western political threat and cultural influence during the 19th century. Notably, in mid-nineteenth-century Korea, the perspectives of Chinese bureaucrats and literati on the West after the first Opium War, significantly shape the emergence of the anti-Western school of thought known as "refuting heterodoxy Cheoksa." On the other hand, in late Qing and Republican China, travelogues and geographical essays played a crucial role in the dissemination and reconfiguration of Western knowledge; they served as an important vector that facilitated the exchange of notions. As for the vehicle of these exchanges, language, two under-researched textbooks by the Russian sinologist James J. Brandt (1869-1944) provide a comprehensive reflection on the characteristics and laws of the Chinese language and its teaching during this period; Brandt's research is valuable insights into the teaching and learning of foreign languages and their impact on individual knowledge and the social and educational environment. To better understand the development of different ideological schools of thought, the panel aims to analyse the circulation and reconfiguration of knowledge and the impact of cross-cultural exchange on ideology, geography, and language as reflected in selected Chinese and Korean texts between 1815 and 1937.

CHINESE AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

Federica Casalin (Sapienza University of Rome)

Language for Literature and Literature for Language: Some Teaching Proposals to Bridge the Distance(s)

Chinese literature is usually incorporated into courses on Chinese studies either as a standalone subject or as a component of educational programs of Chinese language and culture(s). Despite its teaching complexities as a foreign literature written in a non-alphabetic script, the pedagogical aspects of teaching Chinese literature to speakers with diverse linguistic backgrounds have received scant attention to date. This is especially concerning in light of the calls for a post-communicative approach in language teaching and given the renewed interest in the educational role of literary texts as a textual typology characterised by high quality linguistic and cultural input. Drawing on recent research into the importance of providing students with access to literary works in the original language in order to develop students' cultural awareness as well as language skills (Diamantidaki 2019), scholars from various pedagogical careers will share their teaching experiences, focusing on the use of authentic texts to teach modern and premodern literature to classes with diverse linguistic backgrounds. The panel's goal is to encourage further reflection on the opportunities and problems that result from adapting the use of literary texts to fit the extremely diverse teaching objectives in Chinese language and culture courses. Considerable emphasis will be placed on the selection and development of customised teaching materials, with special attention paid to variations that may arise from the study of literary works from various periods and genres, as well as classes made up of native, heritage, and non-native speakers.

LITERATURE (PREMODERN)

Rubén Almendros (INALCO, Paris)

Revisiting the Water Margins: The Shuihu zhuan and its Manyfold Retellings

Regarded as one of the masterworks of Chinese narrative fiction, the *Shuihu zhuan* (*Water Margin*, ca. 16th century) is a key source not just for literary development, but for understanding culture, society, and history. From its inception, the *Shuihu zhuan* was not just a novel but a narrative database embedded in a rhizomatic web of texts. This familiar narrative's continuous evolution spans centuries and traverses media boundaries, from late Song legends to Yuan theatre to mobile games, while adapting to shifting social, local, and cultural circumstances. This panel maps out some of the crosspollination between texts that can take the forms of recycled story elements, reappearing characters, reused narrative structures, etc. Each panelist explores a different intersection pathway at one point in time. The first paper explores the reuse of *Shuihu zhuan* within the framework of a regional novel set in early nineteenth-century Guangdong. The second paper looks at a retelling of the third degree by focusing on a Qing dynasty retelling of *Jin Ping Mei* and its handling of two source texts. The third paper traces how the rationalist reading as a manual for guerilla warfare has reshaped battle narration in contemporary TV adaptations. Following this, the last paper focuses on the limitations and possibilities of a modern, queer, feminist rewriting of the *Shuihu zhuan*'s homosocial realm. Together, the papers highlight not only the unbroken popularity of the *Shuihu zhuan*, but also underscores rich interconnectedness of past and present culture.

Frank Kraushaar (University of Innsbruck)

Towards Anthologizing Translations of Classical Chinese Poetry

Classical Chinese poetry is a particular case in the history of translation. Claimed as modernist "discovery" by enthusiastic readers of Gautier's, Pound's, Alekseyev's, Waley's, Brecht's and other epochal translation best-sellers and serving as reinsurance for generations of Anglo-American poets, the knowledge reflected by powerful literary translations of Chinese poetry appears accidental when compared to the large spectrum of individual poetic styles inherited from eras between Wei-Jin and Song. Departing from these and other general observations, the question may be asked, in how far the quality of poetry translations depends on the translations' capacity to path their own way towards an end that may be way apart from the source-text's historical verity. Investigating how translators, who operate in various languages, proceed and succeed by inventing "classical Chinese poetry" into the transformation of the European and Western imagination of our contemporary world is the objective of a project titled "Classical Chinese Poetry and Modern European Languages. A Critical Anthology" to which this panel shall give further conceptual impulses.

Raffaella Rettinger (University of Würzburg) and Elizabeth Smithrosser (University of Oxford)

Ink, Boundaries, and the Body in Premodern China

Ink permeates the field of Sinology. But even as we find ourselves face-to-face with it every day, rarely do we stop to contemplate its presence beyond the textual or visual content it supplies. Ink is a curious substance, both as a carrier of meaning and a medium. Ink manifests boundaries: between background and detail, skin and external substance, visual and textual. Yet even as it marks boundaries, it does so by permeating and fusing with the canvas itself, typically inextricably or permanently. A parallel phenomenon exists on a social level: from calligraphy to tattooing, ink has served to manifest the boundaries between different social strata, the culturally refined and uncouth, the permissible and stigmatized. Still, marking a boundary or contrast between two groups often simultaneously fuses them together on a conceptual level. This interdisciplinary panel seeks to place the spotlight onto ink itself by drawing together a range of sources across Chinese history. How was ink personified as a human being in literary texts, and what can this tell us both about perceptions of ink and society beyond the page? How does the meaning of inked poetry shift when its canvas is not paper or silk, but human skin? What does the metaphor of imbibing ink imply for notions of culture and education and their relationship to the human body? How have tattoos drawn regional boundaries between the self and other in stories of the mythical luting? The discussion will contribute to fields such as identity, social status, and writing practices.

Tobias Benedikt Zürn (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

The Politics of Creativity and Re-Creation in the Huainanzi

The *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (*Master of Huainan*), compiled under the aegis of Liu An, king of Huainan (ca. 179-122 BCE), is a compendium comprising twenty-one chapters that cover a rich array of topics. A highly constructed text, the *Huainanzi*, gifted by Liu An to his nephew, Han Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (r. 141-87 BCE), was designed to provide the ruler with a set of timeless tools for sagely governance. As such, it comments on some of the most important political, cosmological, and philosophical ideas of its time, as well as providing some unique reflections on key ideological conflicts. This panel offers some new prisms for exploring the political ideas of the *Huainanzi*, with an eye to notions of political creation, re-creation and creativity (as discussed, for example, in Puett 2000). Specifically, we aim to re-examine the text's core agendas by reconsidering some of the ways in which Liu An and the authors of the *Huainanzi* utilized and corresponded with ideologies preceding and prevailing their time. By examining how the *Huainanzi* draws on and differentiates itself from early Chinese music theory, the proto-Daoist classic *Zhuangzi*, and Ruist understandings of ritual, we hope to add to the growing body of scholarship surrounding this important compilation and its unique visions of the Western Han empire that challenge the truism of a Confucian victory at the Han court during the end of the second century BCE.

LITERATURE (MODERN)

CHEN Shi-Ru (National Taiwan Normal University)

Narrative Strategies of Life History in Cross-Cultural Communication (1920-1940)

In the early 20th century, exchanges between Europe and Asia became increasingly frequent, giving rise to diverse overseas travelers from various social classes, backgrounds, and genders. This theme delves into four groups: Chinese laborers, Taiwanese intellectuals, Chinese female doctors, and female writers, exploring their narrative strategies to portray cross-cultural communication, integration, and conflicts. This panel comprises four case studies: (1) Due to World War I, Europe imported laborers from Asia, resulting in the modernization experience for the lower strata of society; (2) Taiwanese Intellectuals engaged in cross-continental journeys to explore modern civilization through lens of contemporary healthcare; (3) Some Chinese female doctors, through intermediaries in Japan, assimilated new knowledge from Europe and America, connecting with the global women's reproductive rights movement; (4) Xiao Hong was a Chinese female writer, whose subjectivity was shaped by her life experience of wandering around China, which was then representing in two biographical films. The reflections of cross-cultural exchanges are presented through letters, travelogues, autobiographies, and biographies, showcasing unique narrative strategies for this generation (1920-1940). Despite the diverse identities and reasons for travel among overseas travelers, a commonality emerges – the departure from the homeland triggers a shift in thinking due to cultural shocks, dissenting in colonization and modernity, thereby intervening in the cultural transformation under cross-cultural exchanges.

Shuo-win CHEN (National Chengchi University)

Ideas in Global Circulation: Translation and Literary Press in China

The panel delves into the intricate interplay between Chinese and Western literary exchanges. This dynamic relationship, fostered through Sino-foreign exchanges and literary publishing, has been pivotal in shaping the modern Chinese literary scene. The panel comprises four papers, each investigating the role of foreign literature translation in enriching the cultural and creative landscape of Chinese literati. Pan Shaw-Yu presents a nuanced analysis of how H.G. Wells' concept of "evolution" in his science fiction was reinterpreted by Chinese translator Yang Xinyi, offering insights into the transformative power of cross-cultural literary interpretation. Lo Shih-lung's study focuses on Li Jianwu's translation of Flaubert's "A Simple Heart," examining how the concept of "conscience" (*liangxin*) is conveyed. Ye Jia's research delves into the transformation of the meaning of 'literature' in modern China, exploring its evolution through the lens of English-Chinese dictionaries compiled by Kwong Ki Chiu. This exploration highlights the significant role of lexicography in shaping literary understanding. Chen Shuo-win, approaching from a "world literature" perspective, investigates the translation of foreign literature and art in the 1930s Shanghai supplement of *Ta Kung Pao*. It reveals how these translations portrayed world literature and contributed to the global cultural dialogue. Collectively, these papers underscore the significant impact of transcultural flows on the development of modern Chinese literature and culture, illustrating how Chinese intellectuals have not only absorbed but also contributed to the global cultural conversation. The panel illuminates the complex interactions and transformations within modern Chinese literature, reflecting its deep entwinement with broader global cultural trends.

Mario De Grandis (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

(Re)presenting "Minorities" in the Modern Sinosphere: Ethnic and Indigenous Groups in Chinese Literature

This panel explores diverse facets of portraying ethnic (*minzu*) and indigenous (*yuanzhumin*) groups through works of literature. The initial four papers concentrate on authors and texts from Tibet, while the subsequent three extend the inquiry to encompass voices from the PRC and Taiwan. Hladikova explores the evolution of magical elements in Tibetan magical realism through Pema Tseden's short stories, which are rooted in everyday lives rather than religious culture. Continuing with the same author, Li explores Pema Tseden's impact on young Tibetan screenwriters and their efforts to construct a distinct cultural identity avoiding conventional cultural activism. As evidenced by Maconi, questions of what it means to represent Tibetaness in the post-Mao era are also central in the works of Yidam Tsering, Dondrup Wangbum and Woesser. Next, Thurston explores UNESCO's impact on the Gesar epic, revealing how it prompted the PRC's professionalization of bards, showcasing the intricate dynamics between grassroots literary forms and global recognition. De Grandis further scrutinizes how state institutions shape cultural literary heritage through nationwide projects collecting and organizing the lore of each Chinese ethnic group. Gibbs explores the novel *The Last Xiongnu*, looking at its hybrid identities shaped by encounters between nomadic and agrarian peoples in northwest China, which reveal tensions in perceptions of ethnic diversity. Broadening the geographical scope, Shernuk offers a comparative case study of Mainland ethnic and Taiwan indigenous authors, arguing that their shared use of standpoint epistemology generates new possibilities for Sinoophone ethnic expression. The panel ends with Mark Bender's commentary.

Rui SHEN (Morehouse College), Wenxin JIN (Ca' Foscari University of Venice/Sorbonne Nouvelle University), and Xi LIU (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

Transcultural Practice and Representations of Women in Modern Chinese Literature

This panel examines a variety of representations of women in modern Chinese literature and film, especially these less studied topics on subaltern women, female self-writings, danmei, and the relevant influence of translation in contemporary Chinese literature. Our seven panelists from Hong Kong, mainland China, the USA, Poland and Italy provide in-depth textual and contextual analysis from different theoretical approaches, enabling polyphonic dialogues (M. Bakhtin) on Chinese cultural production on genre, gender and subjectivity. In her "Oscillation between power and denial," Julia Kristeva identifies the semiotic with the feminine, viewing both as the locus of a "revolutionary potential": "...in social, sexual, and symbolic experiences, being a woman has always provided a means to another and to becoming something else: a subject-in-the-making, a subject on trial....." (Kristeva, 1980) Using plural female images and identities as methods, our panel aims to elucidate diverse ways of signifying gender subjectivities, social discourses, and historical views. We focus on transcultural, translingual and transdisciplinary perspectives and practices within Chinese literature and film. Together, we aim to make empirical, theoretical, and pedagogical contributions to these research fields.

Sze Wing KWOK (The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong)

Sight, Sound, and Taste: Multi-sensory Experiences and Cross-media Modernity in 20th Century China

This panel explores the cross-media practice of Chinese artists from different generations, focusing on sensory experiences such as sight, sound, and taste. By examining the various forms of media transformations, it traces the emergence of ‘cross-media modernity’ and its development in twentieth-century China. The panel begins with a dialogue between the left-wing and liberal on cross-media modernity and modernism in the May Fourth/Post-May Fourth period. Kwok examines the auditory modernity of Mao Dun’s *The Twilight* (1933) during the Republican era, revealing the potential aesthetic dialogue between leftist urban literature, modernism, and the avant-garde through Mao Dun’s representation of Shanghai soundscapes. Guo further analyzes the works of Mu Xin, a post-May Fourth modernist, exploring the dialogue between the images of towers and ruins in his literature and paintings, and investigating the subjectivity of cross-media artists and their exploration of an unfinished modernity. The panel then provides two case studies of cross-media practice, exploring the role of media technologies and sensory experiences in the reconstruction and transformation of traditional folk culture and everyday life. Cheung explores the cross-media adaptations of the Chinese opera *Chasing Fish* from a perspective of media archaeology, tracing the temporal strata shaped and reshaped by the variants of audiovisual technologies. Hu focuses on Wong Kar-wai’s visual adaptation of *Blossoms Shanghai* (2023), emphasizing the significance of gustatory experience in depicting the memories of socialist China and revealing the multiple layers and hybridity within narratives of everyday life, thus challenging the binary modes of historical discourse.

PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF THOUGHT

Markus Samuel Haselbeck (KU Leuven)

Challenging Confucian Norms: Interpretations as Disruption of Tradition

Each thinker with their own perspective on transmitted knowledge inevitably adds new elements to tradition. At times, these interpretations become the norm that later gets reinterpreted again, while other interpretations subside. Although these normative interpretations in hindsight come to represent tradition, they are but singular voices amongst many. Sometimes, they even oppose the traditions brought down to them by drawing from unorthodox sources or actively neglecting central tenets from their own schools. Therefore, what we understand as tradition is often a history of disruption and paradigm shifts. Examining the three scholars Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), and Jiang Qing 蔣慶 (1953–), this panel sets out to illustrate how their interpretations influenced our understanding of what we know as Confucianism today. Each presentation uncovers the philosophical context of the thinker’s ideas, points in which they deviate from their predecessors’ and contemporaries,’ and ultimately invites our audience to rethink what we take for facts within the Confucian tradition.

Jana S. Rošker and Téa Sernelj (University of Ljubljana)

Transformations and Adaptations of Classical Chinese Confucianism in China and East Asia

This double panel features a diverse group of six presenters representing four different countries and three different universities. It is structured into two distinct parts, each consisting of three speakers, and aims to explore the multifaceted nature of Confucianism as a political philosophy and ethics, as well as its contemporary adaptations in East Asian and Sinic societies. *Part 1: Defining Confucianism as a Multifaceted Political Philosophy and Ethics.* This section delves into the multifaceted nature of Confucianism, scrutinizing its role as a dynamic blend of political philosophy and ethics. Presenters will delve into interpretations and dimensions of Chinese Confucianism, highlighting its complexity as a dynamic conceptual framework. They will unveil why Confucianism defies simplistic categorization as a monolithic ideational structure. Instead, they will propose novel methodologies for exploring its transformations by employing diverse modes of dynamic meta-Confucian paradigms. *Part 2: De- and Recontextualisations of Confucianism in China and Beyond.* In the second part, speakers will investigate the intricate transformations and adaptations of Confucianism across traditional and contemporary societies. Their focus will be on highlighting the pivotal role played by the decontextualization and subsequent recontextualization of original concepts within these evolutionary processes. Through their presentations, these speakers will illuminate various facets of Confucianism, both in its original Chinese context and as a transcultural phenomenon. They will also explore its potential relevance within the context of today’s globalized world. Furthermore, they will analyze the dynamic evolution of Confucian values and their impact on shaping the contemporary world.

Roel Sterckx (University of Cambridge)

Figurative Language in Early and Medieval China

In an anecdote preserved in Liu Xiang's 劉向 (79-8 BCE) *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (*Garden of Persuasions*) the sophist Huizi 惠子 (ca. 370-300 BCE) is challenged during a court audience and told to discuss things directly (*zhi yan* 直言) and without using analogies (*pi* 譬). Huizi retorts and argues that this is impossible since the essence of speech or communication writ large consists of explaining what is unknown to a listener using something that is known. Ironically, Huizi's answer here is as direct as it could be and succinctly utilitarian and practical. Ever since Lakoff and Johnson, sinologists have been at pains to theorize how pre-logical conceptual schemes might have influenced argumentation in early China (e.g. Graham, Allan). Others have claimed to be able to unveil deep structures in the cognitive make-up of Chinese thought, or in the lexicon and syntax of the literary Chinese language (e.g. Slingerland, Harbsmeier). Yet others have been critical of conceptual metaphor theories as applied to classical Chinese texts. In this panel we side with Huizi and offer alternative models of image-based language. We start from the assumption that metaphor "is" what metaphor "does" and examine how effective the use figurative language was in various knowledge domains in early and medieval China? We will explore this question across a variety of themes, ranging from the abstract to the concrete, and covering the realms of the social, political, literary, medical and sensory.

HISTORY (PREMODERN)

Xiaomeng HE (University of Hamburg)

Reimagining the Production of Knowledge and Narratives in Early China

Our insight into the past extends beyond transmitted literature to encompass excavated manuscripts, providing a window into the complexities of the intellectual landscape of early China. This panel brings together diverse perspectives encompassing philosophy, history, linguistics, and legal practices, each offering reinterpretations and reconstructions of several ancient Chinese narratives developed over a period spanning the Warring States to the Han dynasty. The first paper explores the concept of fate in the *Zhuangzi* in light of several Guodian manuscripts, highlighting several striking areas of agreement and of disagreement that further blur the canonical boundaries between "Daoist" and "Confucian" thought. The second paper explores the main ideas of the Tsinghua bamboo text, "Wuxingze," within the broader context of Warring States thought, emphasizing the interplay between nature and government therein. The third paper examines the transmission of the story of Tai Bo fleeing to Wu during the Han Dynasty and emphasizes how this historical memory became shaped by climate change, population migration, and cultural accumulation. The last paper presents a comprehensive examination of paratextual elements of legal manuscripts from the Qin and Han periods, revealing their roles as both organizational tools and aids for understanding the production and editing of legal knowledge. Together, these papers offer a rich snapshot of how early Chinese authors gradually developed several well-known narratives and motifs by balancing material interests, syncretic ideological tendencies, and paratextual tools over a long and meandering process that only much later gave way to the stable narratives so familiar today.

Maria Khayutina (University of Munich) and Maxim Korolkov (Heidelberg University)

New Perspectives on the Ancient Chinese Economy: Evidence from Archaeology, Excavated Texts, and Paleoenvironment

The late Bronze Age and the early imperial era of Early China was a time of momentous transitions leading to the emergence of one of the ancient world's most productive economies that, at its peak, sustained a population of about 60 million, an expansive imperial state, vast cities, and affluent elites. Until recently, our understanding of the ancient Chinese economy has been based primarily on transmitted written sources. These texts contain a wealth of information, often without parallel in other ancient literary traditions, including the area of cultivated land in the empire, the amount of coinage issued by the imperial mints, and the description of innovative farming techniques promulgated by the government. However, transmitted texts are much less informative and reliable concerning the preimperial period and contain many lacunae, e.g., in what concerns the diversity of local economic practices and interaction networks under the empire. Fortunately, archaeological explorations in China over the past few decades provided an enormous variety of new data, including material-cultural evidence, excavated texts, skeletal remains, and paleoenvironmental record, which calls for new approaches to the economic history of pre-imperial and early imperial China. This panel will bring together economic historians, archaeologists, and specialists in excavated texts to discuss the significance of these recent finds for understanding economic interactions in ancient China and their implications for broader issues in economic history, such as the long-term economic performance, institutional and environmental factors of economic change, and the relationship between economic, political, and cultural developments.

Alexis Lycas (EPHE, Paris)

Frontier Landscapes in Premodern China

This panel combines archaeological and historical methods to examine built, geographical, and political landscapes on the western and southern edges of the early, medieval, and early modern Sinitic sphere. Each paper will address issues pertaining to interregional exchanges and cultural heterogeneity in frontier territories, which we interpret as liminal zones that are usually heavily contested. One often thinks of landscape in artistic or geographical terms, but we are more interested in the material, social and political aspects of the “production” of frontier landscapes: What does it mean to navigate and decipher spatial patterns of areas that are less familiar to people residing in the Sinitic heartland? How do historical actors navigate the built or “natural” environment in the northwestern steppe, or the hilly and “miasmatic” deep South? How do relations between heterogeneous groups or individuals contribute to the appropriation or rationalization of landscapes?

Samira Müller (University of Zurich)

Periphery as Centre: The Hexi Corridor and the Movement of People, Objects, and Ideas

The natural features of the Hexi region gave way to its description as a corridor. This somewhat unfortunate designation implicates, that humans merely passed through the area on their way to the so-called “Western regions.” Indeed, scholarship pays little to no attention that the Hexi region, in fact, witnessed tremendous social activity. Complex socio-political and economical processes greatly facilitated the movement of people, objects, and ideas to the area, eventually turning the purportedly peripheral Hexi region into a vibrant cultural centre which was itself regarded as “China” proper in Middle Iranian. Through analyses of mortuary data, excavated manuscripts, iconography, and linguistic data our panel argues that this seemingly peripheral region was a cross-cultural centre between the 1st c. BCE and 6th c. CE. It thus explains that taking seriously movement and exchange processes that occurred in this frontier region offers valuable insights into the inner workings of past (and present) societies more generally. Samira Müller presents on the cultural (re)formation under the influence of Chinese immigration as seen through excavated manuscripts. Alexander Campos Aran analyses movement patterns reflected in archaeological finds and explains how the region gradually developed into a socio-political centre during the Wei and Jin periods. Andrea Kreuzpointner argues how originally Han-Chinese grave structures and murals were reinvented in the Hexi region and given a unique touch. Milad Abedi provides a diachronic overview of the perception of “China” as seen in Iranian sources showing how movement shaped the understanding of the faraway eastern land(s).

Ondrej Skrabal (Charles University Prague)

Writing History with Early Chinese Manuscripts: New Questions in Ancient Sources

Starting with the second-century BCE discovery of classics in the former mansion of Confucius, the script, language, and content of unearthed manuscripts have been challenging scholars for millennia. Despite considerable advances in palaeography, hermeneutics, and the understanding of ancient history, every newly discovered manuscript – be it a famous text with transmitted counterpart or an abstruse piece with no affiliation to received corpus – questions the established knowledge and highlights our methodological limitations. This panel showcases on a wide range of materials the complexities of historians' work with early Chinese manuscripts, reflecting on new methods and approaches to deepen our understanding of these precious sources. Adducing the example of *Bamboo Annals*, the first paper raises the issue of the blurred boundary between historians' objectivity and interpretive license, reminding us that flawed editorial assumptions may skew the understanding of texts for centuries. Considering newly unearthed manuscripts *Zhongni yue 仲尼曰 and *Kongzi yue 孔子曰, the second paper proposes a novel typology of Confucius-related texts that informed the creation of one of the most consequential books in East Asian history, the *Analects*. The third paper analyses two unique musical charts from the Tsinghua manuscript collection, the * Wu yin tu 五音圖 and *Yue feng 樂風, and explores how they served as models for structuring correlative thinking in Warring States period. Finally, the fourth paper addresses the typological affiliation of the *Cheng ren 成人 manuscript and discusses its value for understanding Early Chinese legal thought.

HISTORY (MODERN)

Andrea Bréard (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg) and Joshua A. Fogel (York University)

China and Universal Languages in the Early 20th Century

At the turn of the 20th century, a variety of alternatives to the Chinese language and script circulated not only within China. This panel will look into issues of language, logic, universalism, and script reform efforts in a global context. Ranging from artificial language schemes as mechanizable alternatives to writing Chinese characters, to the abandonment of Chinese altogether, we analyze interactions among Chinese, Japanese, and European actors and activists in the context of universal language movements in the early 20th century. While the rising “information age” revealed a dire need for simplified communication across distant language systems not only for science and technology, national sentiments and fears of loss also played an important role in debates that were both linguistic and highly political. The three contributions to this panel reflect both of these facets, looking at actors with a more technical approach to the Chinese language (Bréard) and activists with a political stance (Fogel, Müller-Saini).

Samuel Cheney (University of Edinburgh)

Encountering China: European Travellers in the Long Nineteenth Century

Europe and China drew ever closer over the nineteenth century, largely due to the increasingly expansionist actions of European imperial powers. As a succession of ‘Unequal Treaties’ incrementally opened China to foreign intervention, thousands of Europeans found themselves visiting and living in China for the first time. These soldiers, diplomats, missionaries, and sojourners documented their experiences and impressions through a variety of means (from the textual and visual, to the material and musical), invariably refracting their direct experiences of the country through the prism of pre-existing expectations developed at home. This panel focuses on various responses of European travellers who encountered China during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, exploring how China was perceived, invented, collected, and displayed in a variety of cultural contexts. How did travel accounts and tourist itineraries help to construct an image of Chinese penal practice in the European imagination? How did travel accounts shape the curation of an ‘authentic’ China in European museums, and how did visitors ‘travel’ through such exhibitions? How were British perceptions of China’s diverse operatic traditions used to construct more general assessments of the country’s overall pretensions to ‘civilization’? And what can a set of travel letters tell us about the way Chinese art was constructed for Europeans in the early twentieth century? Taken together, our panel places travel and travel writing (broadly conceived) at the heart of the way China was constructed in the European imagination.

Fredrik Fällman (University of Gothenburg)

Reciprocal Engagement: State-Private Interplay in Republican China

This panel focuses on the interplay between state and private actors in Republican China, trying to unravel its many layers and forms. We present four different cases, varying in time, geography, and context, but with a shared interest in the reciprocity of state-private relations. The attempted mobilization of civil servants through the New Life Movement in the 1930s (Ferlanti) was a form of state building, but also benefited the individuals involved and shaped national consensus. This example is contrasted by the analysis of the Qingbang and the dynamics of exclusion in Shanghai (Aerts), where extra-legal activity was sanctioned and part of the state building process. The case of journalist Hu Lin (Bockholt) is an example of how an individual voice, in close relation to the Anhui Clique, assisted in shaping the public image on foreign affairs in the early Republic, with reciprocal but unequal gains for both parties. The connections between Christian missionaries and the Communist Party in Hubei (Fällman) show how the Party as impending state actor would engage with anyone if beneficial to its goals, however with much secrecy. Idealistic missionaries possibly saw redemptory elements in Party policies but could also secure good relations to future stake holders of the state. Although contextually different, the four cases have noticeable parallels of reciprocal engagement that call for a joint approach and a comprehensive investigation of mutually beneficial state-private relations in Republican China.

Zhongyuan HU (KU Leuven)

Eastward Bound: European Eyes on China in the Early Modern Era

What was behind a Chinoiserie screen? This panel steps into Europe's fascination with China, serving as a portal to the 17th and 18th-century European perception of China. The panel explores the early Sino-European interactions, revealing how perceptions were shaped by scientific exchanges, cultural encounters, religious networks, and political power dynamics. It aims to catch the dynamic and complex flow through which ideas about China were disseminated, transcending mere physical transportation and involving diverse areas and groups of people. Ultimately, this intricate web of connections contributed to the establishment of vivid images of China in the eyes of Europe. This panel investigates various aspects of early Sino-European interactions, spanning knowledge, art, architecture, religion, and politics. Simultaneously, it sheds light on different stages of shaping China's image in Europe. Lejiamei Chen focuses on the debate on ancient Chinese history between Jesuits and European savants in the 18th century to explore China's participation and interactions with the ideas of the Enlightenment period. Zhongyuan Hu pays attention to the flavourful process of intellectual interactions, uncovering how knowledge of Chinese edible plants transited, received, and circulated into Europe in the context of early global movements. Peng Tung analyzes the artistic dimension of Cosimo III de' Medici's ties with China through the Kangxi's portrait presented in Europe, unveiling a complex interaction in early modern diplomacy between the Qing and Tuscany courts. Albert Kozik leads the audience into a multi-sensory experience back to the 18th century Europe to perceive the Chinese style architecture constructed in Europe.

Lars Peter Laamann (SOAS)

Beyond Religion – Aspects of Orthodoxy in Qing China

Orthodoxy as a concept of Chinese religion has been discussed in various contexts. The present panel aims to transcend the religious dimension by elucidating philosophical definitions of social morality in Qing society, the transmission of such norms in Manchu Bible translation as well as notions of "imitation" in Qing art. The search for "true Chinese values" in Qing China had at its very core a contradiction concerning the nature of the dynasty itself. Any differentiation between "genuinely" Chinese, Manchu, or other subentities would have questioned the dynasty's polyethnic ontology.

Lars Peter Laamann (SOAS)

Borderlands of Modern China: Socio-Economic Interactions Within and Beyond China's Boundaries

The aim of the present panel is to demonstrate how the socio-economic development of modern China was profoundly influenced by the interaction of the economic centres within its borders with the adjoining and extraneous populations surrounding imperial China. The five papers of this panel explore populations undergoing both civilisational and cultural change, whilst simultaneously tying them into the majority populations surrounding them. The panel presentations will take the audience in chronological order from the Tang era to the cusp of the current geopolitical situation.

Yi LI (Aberystwyth University)

Recovering the Histories of the Welsh Presence in China and Southeast Asia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Amid the British imperial expansion in the East, the Welsh present a unique case. Compared with other nationalities (the English, the Scots and the Irish), the Welsh are obscure in historical records, and academic studies on the British Empire as well as in modern Asian history. Yet, despite claiming to be the first colony of the English (since 1283), Wales has been an indispensable, often invisible, builder of the British Empire, and the Welsh have been active in Asia as British officials, missionaries, officers, and merchants. Applying the 'four-nation approach,' this panel investigates the Welsh presence in China and Southeast Asia in the past two centuries, analysing their collective recognition of a distinct Welsh-ness, while contributing to the British imperial hegemony over Asian peoples. Using multi-language sources, Yu investigates the life and work of a Wales-born engineer in late Qing and Republican China; Jansen looks at the translated works and intellectual legacy of Timothy Richard, a Welsh Baptist missionary to China, at the turn of the twentieth century; Li analyses a short-lived Welsh Society in wartime Rangoon; and Lopes follows the St. David's Society and the Welsh Male Voice Choir in Hong Kong in the 1940s and the second half of the twentieth century. Together, the panel aims to put the most overlooked British nationality, the Welsh, back into the historical spotlight, and highlight their unique dual role as a nation that was both colonised itself and meanwhile a fully integrated member of the British imperial project in Asia.

Nora Yitong QIU (University College London)

Crossroads of Crisis: Banking, Boundaries, and Health in Late Qing China

This panel delves into the transformative dynamics of Qing China (1820-1940) through the prisms of modernization, sovereignty, and globalization, examining how external influences and internal reforms shaped the trajectory of China's integration into the modern world. Prof. Lars P. Laamann's study on the advent of scientific medicine reveals the unintended consequences of Christian medical missions, highlighting the role of Western missionaries in introducing scientific medical practices as a byproduct of spiritual conquest, thus marking a pivotal moment in China's medical modernization. Dr. Yitong Qiu's analysis on the failure of Qing's banking reforms versus the ascendancy of European banks outlines the complex interplay between governmental efforts, merchant trust, and foreign dominance, elucidating the financial dimensions of China's modernization and integration into the global economy. Sining Lyu's research on the 1911 Manchurian plague control efforts emphasizes the crisis-driven acceleration of Western medical practices and the diplomatic maneuvers to maintain sovereignty, thereby spotlighting the multifaceted impacts of health emergencies on political and diplomatic landscapes. Together, these papers offer a nuanced understanding of the complex processes of modernization and the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization. They shed light on the adaptive strategies of the Qing government, societal responses, and the broader implications of these interactions for China's role in the global order of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Andrea Revelant (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Sino-Japanese Relations and the Three "Nanjing Incidents": A Cross-National Perspective

The Nanjing massacre of 1937-38 has been studied extensively. It is less known, however, that in 1913 and 1927 the same city was the site of two lesser incidents of a different kind. Although the atrocities that hit the city years later dwarf these two episodes, they both occurred at pivotal times in the history of Sino-Japanese relations, and both reflected tensions stemming from opposed national goals. Taken together, the "three Nanjing incidents" mark a trajectory in the history of conflict between Republican China and Imperial Japan. Their analysis can highlight aspects of continuity which are essential for the understanding of bilateral relations over the whole period from the Xinhai Revolution to the Second World War. The panel examines in succession the three incidents, comparing responses in the two countries. The first two papers focus on Japanese public opinion and its influence on foreign policy, showing how the mass media would treat specific events as catalysts in their narratives on China. The third paper provides first a brief account of the Japanese response in 1937, and then reconsiders the three incidents from the viewpoint of Chinese sources. The analysis points out that, at each stage, the perception of the events differed considerably in the two countries. Overall, the panel presents a three-case study on the interplay between domestic affairs and foreign policy. It also demonstrates the need to consider gaps in mutual perceptions as a major issue in Sino-Japanese relations.

Shuping WU (Kyoto University)

Attitudes Toward Railway Development in the Sinosphere: Interchange of Ideas, Economic Development, and Public Opinion

The steam locomotive was an important invention that accelerated and symbolized the Technological Revolution. Among the Great Powers and supposed lesser countries, construction of railway networks came to be the key signifier of a nation's economic development. However, in east Asian countries, deeply influenced by Confucianism, railway networks offered both a promise and posed a threat because of their potential as agents of social change. Even the very concept of a railway was generally refused when it was first introduced to east Asia and was only gradually accepted by people in the Sinosphere. This panel focuses on the image of the railway in the modern Sinosphere, or those who lived in a Confucian context. Our research examines how railways were accepted, spread, and became the root cause of conflict. Qiu Jun Yan will introduce how Japanese Sinologists understood the railway from this conflicted Confucian thought, and how they came to accept it in the 1880s. Shuping Wu's paper explains how the pan-Asianist thought of Sun Yat-sen integrated the issue of railway construction, seeing him establish a company in conjunction with Japanese entrepreneurs to introduce Japanese capital and technology into China in the 1910s. Finally, Zifeng Jin's research will investigate, from the perspective of Manchurian local society, how and why the railway issues of the 1930s evolved into a significant factor influencing Sino-Japanese relations, eventually becoming one of the catalysts for the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident.

RELIGION

Raissa De Gruttola (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Travelling Texts and Objects: The Circulation of Christian Culture in China

The presence of Christian missions in China has an extensive history dating back to the second half of the thirteenth century, when the first Franciscan Friars arrived at the Mongol court. This presence continued through the pivotal activity of the Jesuits in the seventeenth century. In the early nineteenth century, Protestant missionaries from different denominations and various countries reached China establishing their missionary stations. The presence of Catholic and Protestant missionaries and Christians in China extends to the present day. Since the very beginning of this process, individual missionaries, as well as religious orders or denominations were the vehicle of transmission of Christian culture in China. Remarkably, this transmission was not confined to Church settings but permeated diverse fields and activities, not inherently religious. For example, Catholic missionaries played important roles in the scientific realm at the Ming court; Protestants were very dynamic translators of biblical texts and significantly contributed to the development of Mandarin as a national language in the twentieth century. Many other examples and experiences can be found in the documents. The purpose of this panel is to present some distinctive cases where Christian culture was transmitted and circulated in China by Christian missionaries through the centuries, considering both Catholic and Protestant settings and the role of different types of texts and objects that travelled alongside or were produced by missionaries. Through this analysis, the panel aims to provide new insights into the reciprocal influences that have shaped the complex relationship between Christian culture and China over time.

Qijun ZHENG (EPHE, Paris) and Philip Clart (Leipzig University)

Adaptation and Continuity: Religious Identity, Practices and Textual Innovations in Changing Chinese Societies

The panel titled “Adaptation and Continuity: Religious Identity, Practices and Textual Innovations in Changing Chinese Societies” brings together four papers that explore the intersection of religion and society in the context of dynamic historical landscape in the Chinese communities. Each paper, in its unique way, addresses how religious identity, practices and textual traditions have adapted and evolved in response to significant socio-political changes, from the late imperial period to the contemporary era. The papers traverse diverse religious traditions, from the intricate blending of Islamic and Chinese legal frameworks to the interaction of Confucianism with Catholicism during the late Qing dynasty, from the resilience of the Daoist Maoshan pilgrimage in Republican China to the contemporary digital evolution of traditional religious rituals. This common theme of adaptation and continuity amid transformation provides a compelling framework for understanding the resilience and dynamism of religious traditions amidst cultural exchange and political upheaval. They highlight the continuous interplay between tradition and innovation, revealing the dynamic nature of religious life and textual tradition in Chinese communities.

POLITICS AND IR

Erik Mo Welin (Swedish National China Centre)

The Shadow of China in Sweden and Beyond: A Historical and Cross-Sector Examination and Discussion

China is increasingly seen as a threat to European political stability and the national security of European states, a perception that can only be said to have increased since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and a subsequent radically changed security climate in Europe. Ranging from issues relating to Chinese technology, investment, disinformation and interference, stakeholders in multiple sectors are becoming more concerned with risks of China's presence and increased influence in Europe. At the same time, actors within these sectors, including scholars, businesses, local governments, and civil society, still hope to benefit from cooperation with Chinese counterparts. It is therefore essential to develop tools and strategies to navigate the new climate and China's changing and more assertive role in global politics. This roundtable brings together three analysts at the Swedish National China Centre to discuss both perceived and real risks of Chinese presence and influence in Europe, using Sweden as a case-study. The Swedish National China Centre is an independent national expertise center on China and Sino-Swedish relations and will employ this expertise and Sweden's experiences with China as a point of departure for further discussion. The participants scrutinize Chinese presence and influence in Sweden from both a historical and contemporary perspective. Sweden stands out both historically, where Sweden became a platform for China to galvanize support in Europe during the 1960s, and from a contemporary perspective, as Swedes today have among most unfavorable views of China in Europe. Hence, Sweden can provide a fruitful starting point for further discussions. We invite scholars at EACS from all disciplines to join the conversation on China's presence and influence in Europe across multiple sectors of society.

Anastasia Sinitsyna (University of Tartu)

Environment and Power: China as a Global Player in the International Arena

In recent years, China has emerged as a pivotal player in global environmental governance, challenging established power dynamics and reshaping assumptions about the agency of the Global South. This panel assesses China's responsibility and influence within the international environmental framework, shedding light on its evolving role in shaping climate policies and sustainable development initiatives. The discourse surrounding China has undergone a discernible international transformation. Shifting focus from China's engagement in the EU context towards the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and further exploring small Himalayan states (Ladakh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh), the panel seeks to shed the light on varied perspectives of China characterizing it as a systemic rival, competitor, or potential collaborator.

Anastasia Sinitsyna and Elo Süld (University of Tartu)

How to ReConnect China while De-Risking?

In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, the European Union and China maintain a consistently dynamic relationship. Recent geopolitical challenges have underscored the dimensions of competition and systemic rivalry in the EU's stance toward China. Various factors have prompted the EU to shift its approach from a strategy of decoupling to a more softly de-risking approach. The roundtable discussion aims to address the overarching question how to reconnect with China while mitigating the risks for the EU which occur from this cooperation. The discussion explores four specific domains of EU-China cooperation and concludes with recommendations which types of cooperation are desirable, possible, or impossible from the EU's vantage point. To do so, it offers an overview of the patterns, drivers, barriers, and challenges characterising the EU's policy approach to China in the fields of science and technology, economy and trade, China's domestic governance, and China's foreign policy. The roundtable contributions draw on the latest results produced by the ReConnect China project for each of these fields. ReConnect China brings together 15 partners and 66 researchers from 12 EU Member States possessing diverse skills and complementary expertise. The project is financially supported within the framework of the European Commission's Horizon Europe call HORIZON-CL2-2021-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-07.

Alexander Trauth-Goik (University of Vienna)

The Politics of the Common Good in China

Alongside economic growth, the Chinese Communist Party has increasingly promoted a legitimating amalgam of moral virtues that seek to cultivate ‘civilized’ citizens, who contribute to the common good. Limited scholarly attention has focused on the ways the current brand of Party-state morality may differ from previous civilizing efforts, given the recent inclusion of market actors, new methods of pairing civic education with penalties and incentives, and counter narratives like ‘lying flat’ (*tang ping*) that have arisen from young people’s disillusionment with the country’s hypercompetitive market environment. This panel brings together junior, mid-career and senior scholars from two continents working on such issues, using different methods. Based on survey data, Carolyn L. Hsu (Colgate University) examines the *suzhi* or ‘human quality’ discourse and highlights how young people are beginning to diverge from older generations in their ideas of what it means to be a good person. Christoph Steinhardt (University of Vienna) uses surveys to reassess the alleged “trust crisis” the Party-state uses to justify the imposition of regulatory initiatives like the Social Credit System (SCS). Alexander Trauth-Goik (University of Vienna) explores the discourse on ‘integrity’ associated with this system and demonstrates, through interview data, how the SCS’s rewards and penalties reshape civic stratifications and notions of deservingness and deviance. Finally, Mike Gow (Edge Hill University) draws on legislative, regulatory and policy documents to explore the dimensions to corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Xi Jinping’s New Era (2012-present) and the institutionalization of Party-state morality in relation to the private sector.

ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Marcella Festa (Northwest University, Xi’an)

Advances in Archaeological Sciences in Xinjiang, Northwest China

Despite the recognized significance of Xinjiang in ancient East-West interactions, archaeological research to date has predominantly revolved around establishing chronological sequences of “Archaeological cultures” and understanding their spatial distribution. Limited use of anthropological and archaeometrical approaches has obscured insights into daily life, the broader societal landscape, cultural evolution, and the complexities of ancient civilizations which shaped the Silk Road’s cultural tapestry. Recent projects, driven by fresh inquiries, revised theories, and advanced scientific methods aim to address this gap. This session aims to unite participants employing multiple innovative methods—such as archaeobotany, zooarchaeology, and landscape archaeology—to showcase how recently developed archeometrical techniques are reshaping our understanding of the past in this pivotal region.

Feng GUO (University of Edinburgh)

Visualising the Nation: The Role of Imagery in Modern China’s Transformation

In the early 20th century, China saw a surge in new media technologies and print capitalism, allowing images to rival texts in cultural and political spheres. Focusing on the role of popular arts during China’s tumultuous shifts, this panel examines the relation between visual progress and socio-political discourses. The five papers span portrayals of space, humanity, animals and nature from the Qing’s decline to the Second Sino-Japanese War. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the panel investigates the construction of Chinese national imagery via public visual media. Chung-Wei Yang’s research delves into the self-portrayal in the Current News Pictorial, refocusing attention on the creative process and the often-neglected role of techniques and practitioners. Muyang Zhuang analyses the political allegory presented in Qian Binghe’s caricatures from the early 1910s, uncovering the influence of cartooning on China’s political culture during an underexplored era. Yi Liu evaluates the national photography tour organized by the Liangyou Company and its impact on China’s identity. Feng Guo bridges traditional imagery with wartime propaganda, uncovering the borderland’s role in shaping China’s national image. Stephanie Su presents a transcultural perspective on regional representation by examining Jiangnan in wartime Japanese art, underscoring its significance as an emblem of Chinese and East Asian identities during Japanese imperial rule. Overall, this panel unravels complex issues that have been inserted in art creation – revolution, speciesism, cosmopolitanism, patriotism, and imperialism, aiming to broaden our view of China’s changing position in East Asia and the region’s recognition or disregard of its path towards modernity.

Adriana Iezzi (University of Bologna)

New Expressions of Calligraphic Art in Contemporary China and Their Data Knowledge Representation

Calligraphy is a central tenet of Chinese civilization and the chief of all the arts. It is characterized by an extremely coherent and powerful tradition, and it is strictly linked to the whole history of China. In contemporary times, calligraphy has undergone a radical change and has evolved into a plethora of different forms, characterized by hybridization and crossover experimentation, in all fields of visual and performing arts. These new artistic expressions powerfully resonate China's rich and enduring cultural tradition and at the same times opens calligraphy to the international art panorama. Based on the first results of the "WRITE" ERC funded project, this panel seeks to analyze some of these new expressions, proposing the first data model that is able to describe such multifaceted and complex data. The first paper of the panel specifically illustrates the artistic production of Wang Dongling, one of the most important Chinese calligraphers who turns calligraphy into a modern art using abstract lines, new materials and tools, and cross-media artworks. The second paper explores how contemporary Chinese artists are trying to interconnect calligraphy and performance art into innovative artistic practices. The third paper gives an overview of the use of Chinese writing and calligraphy in contemporary graffiti across China. Finally, the fourth paper illustrates the WRITE digital archive elaborated to collect, structure, and preserve the multifaceted domain of these artistic expressions and their data, and the three levels analysis carried out on that data.

Chin-Yin TSENG (Dunhuang Academy)

The Exotica and its Power of Transformation

This panel looks at an array of case studies that highlight objects regarded as "exotica" at different points in the Eurasian interaction, from pre-history to modernity, within the context of Chinese art and archaeology. In the East-West encounter, happening in both directions, visual traditions from different cultural spheres tend to become lost as its particularities are often relegated to mere exoticism, associated with fantasies of opulence and eccentric splendor. The notion of exoticism is closely linked to cultural mixtures from different origins and their interconnection with people's mobility, involving acts of trade, diplomacy, war, and other types of cultural encounter. By inserting itself into the existing local repertoire of material culture, the "exotica" brings to the viewer a sense of wonder in a rather unexpected manner that stirs the senses of its beholders. Papers in this panel focus on the transmission, adaptation, and reception of visual forms, motifs, and different types of material across the Eurasian continent that address how local societies responded to new visual cultural stimuli. The aim of this panel is to bring together archaeologists and art historians who share the same challenges in response to tackling the ways in which knowledge and technology were transmitted through materiality. In this process, we hope to reveal the many faces of Chinese art and archaeology that continue to be fluid and should not be viewed in geographical or cultural isolation.

MUSEUM STUDIES AND MATERIAL CULTURE

Ornella De Nigris (Siena University)

Bowu 博物 and Meishu 美术: Exploring the Intercultural Dialogue Between China and the West Regarding Art and Material Culture from the Late Qing to the Republican Period

Against the backdrop of political and institutional changes, during the late-Qing and Republican period China underwent a renovation process triggered by the exposure to a new system of scientific-technological know-how from the West. This process fostered the creation of new terminologies to describe entire fields of knowledge and contributed to the development of a modern language. The neologisms *bowu* and *meishu* coined in the second half of the 19th century are indicative of this process. While these terms were used to translate the English designation for “natural science (or natural history)” and “fine arts,” they also symbolized a departure from traditional approaches to observing, appreciating and studying nature and material culture. Moreover, *bowu* and *meishu* found application in compound words referring to new cultural institutions, such as museums (*bowuguan*) and art museums (*meishuguan*). By adopting methodologies from different fields of study, this double panel aims to explore the new aesthetical values, approaches to material culture, and conceptions of art circulating in modern China with a focus on the dissemination and evolution of the concepts of *bowu* and *meishu*. This discussion will follow the trajectory of the intercultural dialogue between China and the West. Individual presentations will examine various primary sources, delving into the pages of magazines, travelogues, essays, and literary works published during the late-Qing and the Republican period. The overall goal is to offer a multifaceted portrayal of how intellectuals, educators, and artists active in the renovation process of China, described their encounter with Western art and culture and what fell under the umbrella of *bowu* and *meishu*.

Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik (University of Ljubljana)

Routes and Networks: Mobility Patterns of Chinese Objects During and After Austria-Hungary

In the former Austria-Hungary, it is a particular challenge to determine the history of individual artefacts and collections. When Austria-Hungary disintegrated into several nation states after 1918, the Chinese collections acquired in the 19th and early 20th centuries fell victim to methodological nationalism, in which phenomena were mainly analysed within the borders of the currently existing states. The failure to trace the circulation of collectibles across existing borders and social scales has led to an oversimplified picture of cultural contacts between the former Austria-Hungary and China and their mutual understanding. In this panel we therefore attempt to go beyond such limitations and approach the history of collecting Chinese objects through the mobility of objects and people in the former Austria-Hungary and after its collapse. We focus on different patterns of mobility: a) the ways in which Chinese objects came to Austria-Hungary, focussing on direct and indirect contacts; b) the mobility of people within Austria-Hungary and Central Europe. We discuss the social networks and how their interactions shaped the identity of the collections and their owners; c) the mobility of objects between the private and public spheres, especially after the Vienna World's Fair in 1873, which favoured the growing interest in East Asia and thus the establishment of Chinese collections in museums. The objects were often passed on to family and friends. Later, they found their way into public institutions through various channels and sometimes moved back and forth between different institutions.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Daniele Brombal (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Language-Based Area Studies for Sustainability Transformations. Theoretical, Methodological, and Applied Insights from a Transdisciplinary Project

This panel explores the potential of language-based areas studies (AS) to nurture scholarship on social-ecological interactions. To this end, we showcase research done at the transdisciplinary Laboratory on Area Studies for Sustainability Transformations (LAST Lab), launched in 2022 at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. The panel delves into theoretical, methodological, and applied prospects of AS' engagement with sustainability science and practice. Each of the three presentations focuses on a specific LAST Lab goal, i.e.: (a) reframing AS as a relational process, tuned-in with latest developments in sustainability science; (b) designing tools for applied linguistics, to make sense of how language and discourse shape human-nature relations in specific environmental and cultural contexts; and (c) leveraging political ecology to develop place-sensitive research on environmental politics. The first presentation provides an overview of the capacity of AS to produce knowledge of social-ecological relevance, by leveraging the methodological richness and the relational logic inherent in the work of AS scholars. The second shares a suite of tools designed at LAST Lab to identify key linguistic features shaping environmental discourses, providing concrete examples of its application on Chinese texts. The third introduces an innovative methodology to investigate the transformative potential of environmental resistance, sharing insights from archetypal cases in mainland China. To enable meaningful engagement with the audience, this panel integrates a traditional format with collaborative exercises for checking-in and final harvesting.

Lena Kaufmann (University of Fribourg) and Fabienne Wallenwein (Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies)

Reinventing the Chinese Countryside: Smart-Farming, Livestreaming and Landscape Preservation

Over the past two decades, China has prioritised agricultural development and rural improvement, beginning with its 2005 campaign to 'build a new socialist countryside' and the 2007 paradigm of 'ecological civilisation.' Building on this foundation, the 'rural revitalisation' (*xiangcun zhenxing* 乡村振兴) strategy, was introduced in 2017 and consolidated in the 'Law on the Promotion of Rural Revitalisation' in 2021. It aims to increase farmers' incomes, enhance rural infrastructure, promote high-quality industrialisation and urbanisation, reduce rural-urban inequalities, shape new urbanites, and position China as a purportedly modern 'agricultural superpower.' Despite clear policy directions, the various actors, everyday negotiations, and on-the-ground impacts of 'rural revitalisation' remain largely unexplored. With about one third of China's population still registered as rural, understanding how this strategy affects rural areas and how people respond to the policy framework is crucial. This interdisciplinary panel integrates textual-sinological, qualitative-ethnographic, and image-based analysis. It explores the multifaceted aspects of 'rural revitalisation,' including heritage politics, landscape conservation, new images of the 'rural,' rural platform economies, and the digitalisation of agriculture. Additionally, it examines how these elements impact and create categories of landscapes and people, such as return migrants, 'new farmers,' and digital entrepreneurs. By focusing on the various actors involved in 'rural revitalisation,' the panel asks: How is rural space transformed through digital technologies and the reshaping of rural landscape? This panel provides insights beyond official documents, contributing to a better understanding of the policy-practice, central-local, and rural-urban nexus, offering valuable perspectives beyond the thematic focus.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY.

Piotr Gibas (College of Charleston)

Food, Sustainability and National Identity in Taiwan

The papers in this panel discuss issues related to food in Taiwan from a socio-political, economic, and public health perspective, such as the natural environment, ecology, sustainability, dietary practices, food security, public health, and national identity. In the past two decades, we have seen a conscious effort in Taiwan to create a sustainable, healthy, and entirely native “national” cuisine. New foods and ingredients have been developed, such as wild plants native to Taiwan, that replace or supplement for commercially farmed, non-native, or imported foods. In the process, local chefs and farmers are rediscovering the Island’s resources and create a unique new cuisine using things that always existed in Taiwan but were not used. By focusing on native ingredients, Taiwanese chefs and farmers consciously participate in developing the fledging Taiwanese national identity. By focusing on the Island and eating local food, Taiwanese consumers identify with it. Taiwanese people live within the limits of the Island—Taiwan is all they have—but because of that, they become environmentally conscious and strive to become self-sufficient.

Marius Meinhof (Bielefeld University/Dresden University of Technology) and Grete Schönebeck (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Doing Family and Filial Piety in China – Contemporary Sociological Perspectives

Filial piety (孝) is one of the key sensemaking concepts employed in China to negotiate intergenerational relations, generation-specific roles and boundaries of kinship. However, what can be called “filial” is subject to constant, ongoing negotiation. Our panel explores the way in which filial piety is negotiated in state discourse, popular discourse and everyday life practice within families, and which consequences this has for practices of doing family and doing generation, e.g. in terms of empowerment of members of different generations. We also analyse state propaganda and local government programs as one important context that shapes discourses on filial piety, and that tries to connect filial piety to nationalism, Chinese identity, and loyalty to the country. By doing so, we highlight the dynamic process of negotiating filiality and, in course of this, negotiating Chineseness.

Gina Song Lopez (Lund University)

Edibility in Flux: Diets, Moralities, and Foodways in the Contemporary Sino-Cultural Sphere

Thinking with and through food can help us more intimately understand a society. Food consumption patterns are deeply tied to social, political, and economic processes. At the same time, what people eat and how food is eaten foregrounds the moralities, imaginaries, and aspirations involved in the making (or unmaking) of a meal. This panel places food at the centre of the table to discuss change in the contemporary Sino-cultural sphere. It takes on an interdisciplinary perspective to look at representative issues coming to the fore amidst shifting foodways. Among these, China's growing appetite for meat and milk is a key issue of concern in the face of the climate crisis, understanding the embeddedness of these animal products is key to achieve sustainable food systems transition. Along these lines, it is worth noting the work of an emerging ecosystem of actors advancing plant-forward diets, including new approaches to veg*nism and meatless food. Yet, regardless of dietary choices, one key source of anxiety in Chinese foodways today remains the issue of food safety, an aspect where media exposing fake foods requires further scrutiny beyond scandals. Ultimately, food is also about identities, and when these are contested, food may also offer an avenue for expression and resistance.

**Rune Steenberg (Palacký University Olomouc) and Martin Lavička (Palacký University Olomouc/
Lund University)**

Spheres of Knowledge Production on the Relations between Minoritised People and the Party-State in the PRC

The relationship between the Chinese party-state and the PRC's minoritised populations is complicated and controversial. While party pressure colours all discussion on this within China, it doesn't fully dictate it, and along with blaring propaganda – and in spite of it – a multitude of perspectives and discourses can be found. This panel seeks to explore different realms of knowledge production on the relations between minoritised people and the state, its institutions and its narratives and ideology. This exploration ranges from the legal governance under the so-called Socialist Rule of Law with Chinese Characteristics to Uyghur intellectuals' notions of modernity and how to be a good person in contemporary Uyghur society within China. It further takes us from research on de-extremification in Xinjiang published in Party School journals to young Uyghur influencers supporting government policy on Chinese and international social media in public-private partnership-like arrangements. These different discourses interweave to help establish relations of suppression, dependence, definition, interaction and belonging between the Chinese party-state and minoritised populations within the PRC. In this panel, we focus particularly on the minoritised people of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. We draw up the narrative and institutional relations between these discourses, their contradictions and similarities and how they relate to wider frames of knowledge production and power in China.

MUSIC, MEDIA, AND THE PERFORMING ARTS

Justyna Jaguścik (University of Berne)

Who Are the People? Contemporary Sinophone Theater Between Individualism and Collective Identifications

The predominance of individual over the collective characterizes the current socio-economic moment of late capitalism. The political assertion of individual rights is accompanied by the neoliberal prioritization of the utility-maximizing individual. Political and economic processes are completed by a cultural ideal that valorizes self-expression and independence. For many, collectives have become suspicious and burdened by past-century's crimes and catastrophes. However, while consumption, work, and politics are no longer necessarily collective endeavors and can be performed in isolation in front of computer screens, simultaneously, today masses are connected by media and global economic dependences that affect individuals in new ways. Can they still act as a united body? Our panel focuses on dramas and performances that strive for a just form of collective and individual existence and, in doing so, perceive the social or political not as impersonal forces, but as something that can be acted upon. We ask who the people are, or which collectives these art works interpellate. Our discussion begins with Wu Nian Zhen's play *The Human Condition (2)* (2006) that negotiates Taiwanese identity juggling suppressed historical memories, cultural essentialism, Western influences and traditional gender roles. Next, we turn to Chung Chiao's play *Crack* (2024), an example of Taiwanese people's theater that grapples with the official memory of local, sensitive historical events while addressing civil wars in the world today. The last presentation addresses post-Covid 19 scripts from the PRC and Macau, which focus on the PRC's multitude of peasants and workers, whose precarious existence was jeopardized by the pandemic.

Man HE (Williams College)

Theory of Theatre and Performance in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century China

This double-panel recalibrates the significance of theoretical writings and practices about Chinese spoken and dance theatres. Departing from abstract definitions, these papers turn to translations and adaptations, plays and metanarratives, curricula and textbooks to identify embedded theories while reconstructing the dynamic process of theorization. We reveal how such endeavors reformulated the relationship between aesthetics and politics, creativity and professionalization, and theatre history and historiography. Theory, rather than being hidden, emerges here as a vibrant field of expression. Panel I investigates the transnational traffic of specific theatrical forms and performance methodologies. Finegan examines Chen Dabei's interlingual-intersemiotic translation of the 1920s amateur theatre movement, highlighting the experimental foundations of early Chinese spoken drama. Liu traces how Zhang Junxiang combined his Yale studies and 1940s wartime experiences to theorize the new functions of the theatrical director. Stecher revisits the translation of "Stanislavski" by comparing texts written in Chinese, German, and English, asserting that the "System" took on new forms in China. Chiriță scrutinizes Tian Gebing's "postcolonial theatre" in Paper Tiger's contemporary productions, arguing that the theater troupe's transculturality subverts the binary between center and periphery. Panel II unpacks theories from practices. Christ traces the basic issues and concepts that have evolved from theoretical reflections on historical drama since the Republican era. HE examines the soundscape of wartime street theatre, foregrounding aesthetic considerations often overshadowed by political mobilization. Wilcox closely reads the 1960 dance curriculum developed by the Beijing Dance School, identifying training practices as the embodied theory which brought about Chinese Classical Dance.

SINOPHONE WORLDS

Wendong CUI (CUHK)

Transcultural Flows: Rethinking Boundaries in the Sinophone World(s)

This panel delves into the vibrant dynamics between literature and visual arts within the Sinophone world(s), emphasizing transculturation, interconnectedness, and the fluidity of boundaries. Moving beyond the Heideggerian conception of worlding as an active force of becoming, we examine how transcultural flows reshape and redefine Sinophone cultural expressions through literary and artistic mediations. We commence with an examination of the nuanced appropriation of German world literature sources in the young Lu Xun's avant-garde translation project, which sets the stage for the emergence of Chinese literary modernity. Then we explore the assimilation and reinterpretation of Mexican, Egyptian, and Indian art in Zhang Guangyu's illustrations during Republican-era China, analyzing how these transnational influences contribute to the diverse landscape of Sinophone cultural expressions. Moreover, we scrutinize cross-regional narratives of women during the Sino-Japanese War, exploring how these narratives act as conduits of differences, fostering interconnectedness and opening up new configurations of the Sinophone world. Our emphasis is on the fluidity of cultural boundaries and the cross-boundary nature of these narratives. Integrating this discussion, we analyze Singaporean Tamil writer Singai Ma Elangkannan's novels, examining how his portrayal of the sacred challenges secular narratives in Sinophone literature in Southeast Asia, thereby reshaping cultural identities and contributing to a reconfigured understanding of modernity. Underscoring the role of literature and visual art in bringing together diverse elements in a Sinophone topology of being, this panel addresses Chinese literary modernity as a dynamic, transcultural force that cultivates interconnectedness and redefines boundaries within the Sinophone world(s).

Serena De Marchi (Stockholm University)

Memory, History, and Representation in Modern and Contemporary Narratives from Taiwan

The movement through which the past emerges into the narrative reality of the present does not follow a linear trajectory; the path is rather fragmented, undulatory, sometimes chaotic or apparently nonsensical. As posited by Astrid Erll, "memories do not hold still," but require continuous re-actualisation in order to be kept alive. This panel is interested in the ways the memorial re-actualisations of Taiwan's past emerge in modern and contemporary Taiwanese fictional narratives, including prose, poetry, and theatre plays. Considering the narrative form as a privileged site where memory's movements can be observed, this panel aims to discuss and compare different reconfigurations of Taiwan's traumatic past, from the Japanese colonial period to the White Terror. Silvia Schiavi investigates Taiwan's surrealist poetry to look into the modes of remembering the traumatic experience of Japanese colonialism. Rosa Lombardi focuses on Chen Li's highly experimental poetry to explore the potential of the poetic text to reconfigure historical trauma (individual and collective). Meng-Hao Li takes Liying Chien's theatrical piece *Dress in Code* to reflect on the roles of victims and perpetrators (and their possible reversal) against the background of the legacy of the White Terror. Finally, Taiwan's authoritarian period is also the focus of Serena De Marchi's contribution, which analyses the reconstruction of family memories in the works of two contemporary novels from and about Taiwan.

INTERDISCIPLINARY

Linda Chu (Academia Sinica/National Taiwan Normal University)

Worldmaking the Sacred: Bridging Realms through the Literary

In exploring the relationship between “worlds,” language, and literature, philosopher Nelson Goodman’s 1978 conceptualization of worldmaking emphasizes the recognition and comprehension of patterns as fundamental to creating worlds through language. This idea resonates with the fifth-century thoughts of Chinese literary scholar Liu Xie, who posited that sages discerned clues—signs of meaning—and expressed them through language, with patterns serving as the vessel for the source of knowledge and understanding (Dao). This shared emphasis on interpreting patterns, evident in both Liu Xie and Goodman, forms the foundation of the “worldmaking” that our panel aims to explore. Through papers investigating Buddhism and Christianity within literary contexts, we will delve into the construction and reconstruction of these religions. A reinterpretation of the Lotus Sutra will showcase its narrative’s contribution to shaping a novel relationship between the text and the world. Writings about Emperor Wu of Liang’s *Prajnaparamita Sutra* expounding ceremony will reveal how ritual texts transform abstract values into perceptible experiences, creating new symbolic meanings; these texts guide readers through complex rituals, helping them understand and internalize these values. Investigation into Jesuit texts on rhetoric, essential for initiating dialogues between the Chinese and European traditions, will demonstrate how intercultural metaphors bridged the experiences of the East and West and manifested in the literary. In essence, our panel seeks to showcase how the sacred across various religions collides and manifests in literary realms, demonstrating the bridging and (re)making of worlds (and words) at hand.

Georgijs Dunajevs (University of Würzburg) and Alevtina Solovyeva (University of Tartu)

Configuring the Extraordinary in the Chinese Worldview(s): An Interdisciplinary Perspective

Extraordinary phenomena maintain a peculiar place in the Chinese worldview. Although the Chinese world order is predominantly shaped by Confucian norms that shun the discourse on the strange and supernatural, the human realm in the Chinese view shares its plain with ghosts, gods, spirits, were-animals, and other likewise entities, resulting in close interaction between human and non-human worlds. This interaction has not only manifested in a large body of literature on strange and supernatural topics but has permeated the very fabric of Chinese society as beliefs, myths, and superstitions that exist to this day. By uncovering the cultural and historical contexts hiding behind these phenomena, we move one step closer towards understanding the mentality and experience of the Chinese people. Spanning the fields of literary criticism, history of thought, religious studies, folklore studies, and ethnography, the panel adopts an interdisciplinary perspective, with individual papers exploring different aspects of the extraordinary in Chinese thought, literature, and society. Treading on the blurry border between the notions of “strange” and “supernatural,” the papers discuss the ontological dimensions of the extraordinary and its interrelationship with the human world. From the first instances of supernatural elements in ancient philosophical texts, passing by manifestations of strange creatures in mediaeval literature, to the invocation of gods for business deals in modern-day Taiwan, the panel broadly examines the configuration of extraordinary phenomena across literature, religious traditions, and social practices of the Chinese, and in a broader context, the Sinophone worldviews.

Elizabeth Emrich-Rouge (University of Cambridge)

Landscapes of Resistance: Representations of the Natural World in Twentieth-Century China

Landscapes, whether described in print, photographed or mapped, are inextricably linked to the various ways in which people see, and are allowed to see, the world around them. In the context of twentieth-century China, a rich and varied print culture, direct guidance by the state, science education and spiritual belief systems, among many other factors, all impacted the ways that artists, writers, journalists and politicians envisaged the natural world and depicted it to others. For example, recent work has sensitively unpacked the connections between *guohua* and photography, particularly in relation to the Nationalist government’s infrastructure projects in southeastern China during the 1930s. (Noth 2022) Other work has focused on art academies’ instruction of drawing from life (Ho 2020) and open-air painting in conceptualising the ‘ocular turn’ of twentieth-century China (Gu 2020). Building on these valuable contributions, how can we analyse landscapes as vehicles of political resistance to either the dominant political power, or to the status quo? This panel seeks to investigate the connections or disjunctions between an individual or group’s experience of and representation of the natural world, often, but not exclusively, through visual art and/or literature. What were the aspects of that personal experience or involvement in publication, for example, that helped to shape the political in depictions of the natural world? How does a landscape embody resistance, and why?

Andreas Fulda (University of Nottingham)

Spotlight: Challenging Unspoken Assumptions in Contemporary China Studies

Paradigms in the arts and humanities as well as in the social sciences can provide shared understanding and guide inquiry. However, disciplinary debates about paradigmatic frameworks have been rare in contemporary China studies. In a field that is in crisis, this poses a problem. As long as assumptions about contemporary China are only implicit in existing scholarship, it remains difficult to evaluate a researchers' positionality, epistemological choices, and methodological approaches. In this panel, we will discuss the significance of analytical frameworks. Participants will investigate whether there are any implicit paradigms operating silently in the field. As part of the discussion, participants will also explore non-paradigmatic methodologies and epistemologies in contemporary China studies. Drawing on specific examples this panel will demonstrate that by making paradigmatic assumptions explicit, they become more open to challenge, reinterpretation and revision in light of new perspectives and evolving realities.

Mariia Guleva (Charles University Prague)

"Dr. Oppenheimer—Comrade Yuanzi Dan": Visions of Nuclear Power from Mao-Era China

After the PRC detonated its first atomic bomb on October 16, 1964, the next day's *Renmin Ribao* proudly greeted its readers with the front line heading "A major achievement enforcing the strength of national defence, a major contribution to safeguarding peace in the world: success in exploding China's first atomic bomb." Nuclear power was among the most widely-spread features of ideological and popular discourses in Mao-era China: "imperialist" A-bombs threatened but failed to petrify the "peace-loving peoples" of the world, nuclear anxieties ran parallel to the dreams of the unlimited might of nuclear energy, and scientific lexicon made its way into daily news and entertainment. Narratives about Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims, the news about Bikini Atoll testing, and falling American rockets were juxtaposed to the construction of nuclear power plants in the socialist camp countries and successful Soviet and Chinese experiments with their own nuclear weapons. This panel proposes to trace the ways in which these contradictory and often ominous trends were woven into the narration of news and policies in the PRC. The presenters follow the shifts in imagining nuclear power's potential in ideological animadversion in popular publications and newspaper articles on science, political cartoons, poetry, and revolutionary songs and red operas. The presenters aspire to explore how political propaganda bridged over the divides between contradictory slogans of the "atomic age." They also intend to reconstruct the intricate web of ideological, intellectual, and creative conditions that shaped both individual and collective expressions in the media landscape, and its post-Mao refractions.

Fu-ming LEE (National Taiwan University)

How to Be a Reader: From 11th to 20th Century China

This panel delves into the intricacies of how Chinese individuals engaged in reading, contemplated their reading practices, and perceived themselves as readers from the 11th century to the Republican Period. Departing from inquiries into the content, time, and location of reading events, our studies focus on the methodologies of reading and the underlying motivations—a research perspective that requires further attention in the history of reading. The first two presentations re-examine pre-modern China's reading traditions. Ren-Yuan Li investigates how Neo-Confucian scholars from the 11th to the 14th century systematically employed "methods of reading books" to manage information overload stemming from the widespread circulation of woodblock-printed books. Xiaoqiao Ling analyzes the "marvelous annotations" in the 1499 *The Story of the Western Wing*, shedding light on the late imperial tradition of encyclopedic learning. The following two presentations delve into how readers responded to the publishing and political landscape in modern China. Utilizing fan-mails and lay publications, Fu-ming Lee explores readers' increasing desire and anxiety for public exposure, driven by the surge in easily accessible published materials in Republican China. Xiaoyu Xia investigates how readers interpreted the censorial "blank spaces" in 1930s newspapers, unveiling an alternative and creative ethics and politics of reading culture. Rather than presenting a comprehensive linear history of reading from pre-modern to modern China, these papers aim to acknowledge a non-linear narrative. They explore how individuals navigate their intellectual reading systems marked by intricate mediations and divergent re-appropriations, within the evolving environments of publication and the changing expectations for knowledge and readership.

ZHANG Lu (University of Nottingham)

Transcending Colonial Legacies: Representation of Cultural Objects in Motion in(Ongoing) Post-Colonial Times and the Shaping of Contemporary Societies

This panel shifts its focus from critiquing colonial history to exploring the presentation of colonial items and ideas, emphasizing the profound impacts of colonial legacies on societies. It highlights the mobility of people, objects, and ideas in shaping history and contemporary while fostering transcultural exchange. Three compelling case studies that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries include (1) British missionary Edward Selby Little and his urban planning in Lushan Mountain in Jiangxi, China in the late nineteenth century, continuing during his residence in Kerikeri, New Zealand; (2) The 1935-36 London International Exhibition of Chinese Art, serving as a Sino-British transcultural intellectual transmission, and the subsequent separation of the National Palace Museum, leading to a legitimacy battle over ownership of Chinese “national treasures”; (3) The global proliferation of bubble tea, evolving from a “leftover” product in colonial Taiwan into a pan-Asian commodity and cultural icon. Drawing from archives and firsthand materials, this panel employs a diverse range of research methods, spanning disciplines such as art, history, anthropology, and sociology. Key questions revolve around the transformative impact of the mobility of objects, people, and ideas, as well as their networks, on cultures and histories within the context of colonial history, shaping contemporary and post-colonial narratives and fostering transcultural exchange. It also assesses how reinterpreting cultural objects and spaces can empower multicultural communities and foster reconciliation. This collaborative and interdisciplinary approach aims to provide fresh insights into how post-colonial societies engage with their colonial past, enriching our understanding of the evolving identities of these cities and cultural objects.

